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Food (other than meat) is provided on the day of the burial by the women of the home at which the burial takes place, on the succeeding day by visiting relatives, and on the third day by village neighbours. Women neighbours, like woman relatives, often bring gifts of bark-cloth belts (*amakiba*) with which to bind up the bellies of their bereaved friends, who are all stumble and full of fear, and so support them. These belts symbolize the sympathy of friends in the fearful grief of the mourners. 'If a woman wears many belts at a burial that means that she has many friends; her passionate grief is comforted by their friendship.'[1] And neighbours, like relatives and close friends from other chiefdoms, may bring cloths which are used to wrap the corpse and bind up the bellies of the chief mourners. But these gifts of food, firewood, belts, and cloth are the limit of a neighbour's obligations; very rarely does a neighbour bring a bull to kill for the funeral feast, whereas close kinsmen and affines are obliged to provide a bull or cow for this purpose if they have one. And neighbours take virtually no share in the elaborate ritual which follows for cleansing relatives from the contagion of death, driving the thought of the deceased out of their minds, and bringing back his spirit to bless the home. Their only part is to bring small gifts of millet from which to brew the beer drunk at the close of this ritual.

At an ordinary birth there is very little ceremony and the village as a group is not concerned, though close friends will help the mother during her confinement, fetching wood and water for her, and bringing occasional gifts of cooked food; but twin births are regarded as fearful and dangerous, and an elaborate ritual is performed to cleanse relatives from the contagion which, if left untreated, is believed to lead to serious swelling of the arms, legs, and stomachs, accompanied by diarrhoea. Relatives are treated with many medicines, while village neighbours are sprinkled with one only, but their cattle, especially the cattle herded with those of the man who has begotten twins, are thought to be in danger. At one twin ritual we watched there was some discussion whether all the cattle of the age-village should be treated, or only those of the herd-group to which the father of the twins belonged. Finally it was decided that on previous occasions all the cattle of the village had been treated, and a message was sent

[1] cf. Godfrey Wilson, 'Nyakyusa Conventions of Burial', *Bantu Studies*, Vol. XIII (1939), p. 10.

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ment of fellow villagers (*ikhwenje*) or their angry murmuring (*ikhukhumya*) will bring on wrong-doers 'the breath of men' (*umdoga nya bandu*) causing them, or their children, or cattle, to fall ill, and this breath is the power of the patients exerted by 'defenders' and witches acting together. We asked Mwakila whether 'the defenders' really came to choke a proud, quarrelsome person. 'Mother! They come. "The defenders" and the witches all call one another. They all go. "The defender" is not angry (at the attack), he says, "The man killed himself, he was a quarrelsome fellow!" ' And another friend explained: 'If a woman with wishes to choke her husband, perhaps the first night "the defenders" will turn her back, but then she will plead with them and explain that her husband is a bad man and ill-treats her, then perhaps on the second night they will change their minds and come and help her. Yes, "the defenders" turn round sometimes and throttle people.'

'The breath of men' is thought to cause prolonged illness but not death, and should a death occur then a charge of witchcraft may be brought, and the suspects be required to drink the poison ordeal. 'We said, it is forbidden to kill a man. We others were afraid, although we had disliked the victim ourselves, we feared at some later time the witch would kill us.' All our informants accepted this view in theory, but in practice several cases in which the supposed victims died were cited as instances of 'the breath of men' (see table, pp. 216–8).

The effect of 'the breath of men' is spoken of as 'the curse' (*ikipene*)* and its typical symptom is sterility, or a paralysis of the legs, which, it is thought, can only be cured when the sinner repents and reforms his behaviour, providing at the same time a feast of beer and meat for men of his village or, if it be against his father that he has sinned, of his father's village. At the feast it is essential that the men of the village should admit their responsibility for the sickness, and express hopes for the recovery of the patient. 'Formerly, they would pray and pray, they would let out all their anger, saying: "Certainly we were angry, it was us, but now it is all over." Then life would come back to the sick man and he recovered' (cf. Document, p. 241).

We see then, that a clear distinction is made by the Nyakyusa

* *Ikipene* is not used in the Kukwe district, but is commonly usage in Ungoni, on the Lake-shore plain, and in Ngonde.

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for his own son whom he begot saying: "He is my own flesh and blood", then the men of the village will pass judgement.'

This 'breath' is thought also to fall on a chief who is harsh towards his people, or who acts unconstitutionally, as in refusing to make a 'coming out' ceremony for his sons when his village headmen advise him; and it falls on a village headman who treats a junior in office unfairly, or is overbearing to his men. Both pagan and Christian informants insisted that fear of 'the breath of men' was a powerful sanction in the traditional system against arbitrary rule. Amgowa, a Christian deacon, himself raised the subject one day and said: 'Headmen and chiefs—pagans—would be hard on their people and seize their goods if they (the headmen and chiefs) did not fear witchcraft. Witchcraft is like God to them.'

At every point the solidarity of the village is emphasized; the neighbours themselves are held to be insulted by the bad behaviour of a son—'their son'—to one of their fellows, or by a woman 'selling their son', or by an heir failing to recognize their concern in the inheritance of a deceased fellow. For example, Mwakanyamale had begotten no child for ten years, and this was attributed to the fact that, after quarrelling with his elder brother and refusing to attend his funeral, he had not admitted his fault to the men of the village when he came back and killed a cow. His impotence was attributed to their curse.

As we have seen, morality is thought to depend (i) upon the wrong-doer reforming and providing the men of the village, which is angry, with a bull or beer for a feast, acknowledging guilt as he does so; and (ii) upon the men of the village admitting their anger and responsibility for his illness, and expressing good will. 'If a daughter-in-law should have looked on her father-in-law by mistake she makes beer and sends it to her father-in-law. She calls his friends and admits: "Indeed I was angry with her for she looked at me", and the others say: "Yes, indeed, let her child get fat".' (*vide* pp. 233-6).

It may well be asked, is there any objective reality at the root of this belief in 'the breath of men'? Does the wrong-doer, fearing his neighbours, really become paralysed or impotent? It is possible that a sinner may sometimes develop these symptoms as the result of fear. We do not know, what is certain is that impotence, sterility, lingering illnesses including paralysis, and sickly

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children, are not uncommon; that the penalty of sin is believed often to be delayed, and an illness may be attributed to a wrong committed many years previously; and lastly, that the victim of retribution may be one of several individuals. Parents are thought to be punished by the sickness of their children as well as in their own persons; in a case of sexual transgression it may be either partner who suffers; in the case of a neglected death ritual it may be either the heir or the widow on whose behalf it should have been performed (cf. Document, pp. 206, 236–7). When a woman bears a child after her son is married to a girl who has reached puberty, it is thought that she may fall ill herself, or her husband may be cursed 'because he had agreed to his son marrying a grown girl before the son's mother had grown old'; or the son may have no children because he eloped with his wife, or has 'married a grown girl when his father had only agreed that he should be betrothed to a little girl'.

A lively fear of witchcraft and of the 'breath of men' is inculcated in Nyakyusa children when quite young. Mwaikambo, a Christian, explained that boys learn about witchcraft from their senior play-mates when they are out herding, and in the hut at night in the boys' village, when tales are told. 'Then one fears in one's stomach and thinks: "Father! perhaps I, also, will be eaten by witches."' Ambilikile, another Christian informant, confirmed this, saying: 'We learn about witches from comments on cases of sickness, and from tales. When someone has died people say: "He was a witch, we found a python." Or perhaps of another it is said that "the witches had eaten him". In these tales the witches are said to have eaten people, or spewed them, by means of witchcraft, so that the victim dies. We are also told how the witches fight in the power of witchcraft with their fellows from other villages, and how they fly on their pythons. What we hear always makes witchcraft awe-inspiring. I feared it very much.'

We had ample evidence that for most Nyakyusa the fear of witchcraft and of 'the breath of men' continues throughout life, and that it directly affects behaviour. It is, perhaps, the main sanction for moral behaviour within the village.

No.	Category of Sufferer	Symptoms	Alleged Ills	Diagnosis	Ritual performed
1	Village headman (Ahwenkyinyin)	(a) 5 children died (b) Further deaths among his children after he moved	Enraged neighbours outside [illegible] Failed to perform death ritual of children before leaving		Fled to Lake Bosa place (Mr. Ngoma) Returned home. Killed bull. Admitted fault in not performing ritual
5	Widow	Widow ailing	Ritual not performed for her ex-husband	Illness due to 'the breath of wire'. Diagnosis by divination	Bull killed here. Framed neighbours and relatives. Told of illness. People admitted their guilt. Said she [illegible] was now finished. She continued ill.
9	Widow	Widow ill	Son of chief's family had not killed bull or ram at inheritance ritual	Illness due to 'the breath of wire' Diagnosis by divination	Son killed neighbours and relatives. Killed. Neighbours admitted their guilt.
6	Child	Child ill	Father failed to avoid a gift of food and later, when the war taken back to her husband, sent she to the daughter of a chief's sister	'The breath' came from her husband's friends. 'They are angry because of the ground-nut food'	Were mentioned. The girl died shortly afterwards and her death was confessed to secretly
8	Chief	Chief ill	Refused to hold 'coming out' of war	'The country was angry'	Killed 3 cows for people to feast
6	Married woman	Bore no more children	Ran off with lover three times. Finally husband found lover in her bed.	Her father's village 'shaved' because she had 'killed a man in court'. 'Breath' of village affected because she runs away frequently to be a prostitute. Diviner's diagnosis of the doctor to whom she went for medicine that she might bear children.	Were mentioned
7	Man (a Native)	Deported as [illegible] to prison	Did not come to have affair brother with whom he had quarrelled	'The sun (of his elder brother's village) was angry. Illness due to the same (illegible) of sun'	Killed a cow in elder brother's village but did not tell the sun of the village chief to properly (i.e. about [illegible])
6	Man (A)	Man ill for 3 years (anti-syphilis), ran upon was at Ankobi	Invalid—was tired of [illegible]	All sons were astonished and saved a	a killed it was at father's place. Relatives and neighbours ate after [illegible] a ceremonial goods to (1) the last pig was treated to a [illegible]

[p.206]

* (Illegible = to complain. The explosives & their [illegible] represent), and as per (c) d, (b+c) supra (cf. pp. 99-101).

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(a) "The Breath of Man"—cont.

SUSPICIONS ATTACHED TO MYSTICAL CAUSES—cont.

No.	Category of Sufferer	Symptoms	Alleged Act	Diagnosis	Social sentiment
9	Senior Village Headman	Paralysed	He encouraged Ahidi to report justice headmen from exposing others before others in the court	"Ghosts of senior headmen live in the forests of the junior villagers. So may current remarks he may expected to be the favourite of the dead." Diagnosis by divination	Ahidi and was punished by senior headmen. Ahidi and family left senior headmen and courts friendly
10	Women	Unable to walk	Fined by villagers (neighbours) as shown text of the Kindred Ahidi to do so, adding them to Ahidi	"They (villagers) cursed her"	Nothing yet done. Thought that villagers will take responsibility seeing it is not as Ahidi it should walk
11	Women	Her baby ill	Insulted husband's mother	Ghosts diagnosed as "spirits," a disease due to "the breath of man" by divination, have developed	Woman and child given medicines by a doctor. Woman's father brought a cow for the mother-in-law the husband
12	Headman of young men	Ill a long time and died	He used the young men both in the village of Ahidi Ndlovu before Ahidi had turned	Ghosts due to the breath of man (the fathers brought to attack accident's office as headman by building in the village. Diagnosis by divination	Ahidi have asked no men in Ahidi-law
13	Ahidi (sex)	Ill a year. Died the next year	Ahidi and Ahidi Ndlovu's husband lived in Ndlovu's village. Villages are the land	Village angry. Their breath hit on him while he lives in Ahidi after pregnancy. Diagnosis by divination	After a year's illness (after a hut), the wife Ahidi and relatives a Ndlovu's village
14	Man	Died	Killed dogs had for his children (sex). Due to drunkenness and gave wife one leg in nightmare	Perhaps the dead because to prolong his fellow villagers ways. Suggestions are accepted if a man kills and does not eat them to feast	
15	Women	Her child ill	Hands on her husband	Ghosts diagnosed as spirits (as shown due to "the breath of man"). Diagnosis by divination	Whereabouts of the Women's father-given her sister's blood-feud. Ex-husband called for witness to know and whose dogs eaten and spoke about the child's recovery (of a rift)
16	Younger brothers of Ahidi	Ahidi	Claimed to be a Ahidi	People said "breath of man" (family and witchcraft). Diagnosis by divination	

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(b) 'The Breath of Sins' contd. SUPERSTITIONS ATTRIBUTED TO MYSTICAL CAUSES—contd.

No.	Category of Sufferer	Symptoms	Alleged sin	Diagnosis	Ritual performed
7	Village headman	Pain in hand as a sting dropping the cricket the hand is sore	Had left his work without the agreement of the people	'Country iron angry because he was a headman' (and had gone to work)	Rites. Ritual identity afterwards. Cattle purchased to discharge all debts. Release of all animals for 30 days
8	Young man from village sick in his stomach and in his head and a distress in his	Did not forget a sin he had committed	Not specified	'Village headman, angry at confusion which has taken place, his headman showed their anger by not taking debt to doctor as they should have done. He must atone	Rites were not recorded
9	Cattle, two days after [illegible] to work, illegal	Cattle ill	Did not work for the village neighbours. 'Three complained because C, a great thief, did not work hard for them'	Fell ill night after attending a beer drink at a neighbour's house	Treated neighbours. Treated by a doctor
10	Cattle	Cattle had worms	Promised 1 pot of beer for fellow private when he should have provided 2 pots or a calf	Sickness due to wrath of man. Stop work of a doctor	
11	Cattle	Cattle ill	Cut down a sacred tree which he should not have cut	'The witch country is angry'. 'Private and village headmen are angry'	Treated other patients as usual and had
12	Village headman, Mbiru	Sickness developed	Ordered to pay a fine for disputes in court, and refused. Complained to the District Officer	'All the village headmen are angry'	Rites omitted. Later brought home (cf. pp. 200-1)
13	Man [illegible] of Kiru	Died	He had not one branch for an axe handle from a tree sacred [illegible] to the witchcraft spirit of a village in which he was a sole owner. He had not asked the villagers' permission or sent word as he should have done.	'The "ancient" of the village were angry and killed him'	Rites omitted

[illegible]-E-[illegible]-[illegible]-[illegible]-[illegible] PRINT
Appendix

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789 754 196 ngwe)?" We only liken intercourse and witchcraft; witchcraft is quite different. When a woman is an adulteress I say: "You are a witch (*undoni*); you kill me," but it is just a metaphor (*fye fifwene*). Adultery involves paying for cattle for all of us; it differs from witchcraft. And when I ask a man: "Why, why did you fornicate with my wife?" that means: "You are like a witch." It is just a metaphor. But (he volunteered), if I catch an adulterer with my wife, even if he has practised *coitus interruptus*, I am angry and kill him from jealousy, though I do not suffer from diarrhoea."

837 753 An adulteress is spoken of as an *undoni* "because she brings illness upon her husband" by her adultery, if intercourse is complete, but not, it is thought, if *coitus interruptus* is practised. The illness commonly thought to be caused by a wife's adultery is diarrhoea.

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22. "THE BREATH OF MEN"

Mwaisumo (Aug).

"'The breath of men' is a very serious illness; if a person is ill from "the breath of men" he is in great trouble. Such a person never recovers until they pray (*lilombelwapo*). This illness comes especially when a man enters into his inheritance but does not perform the ritual, perhaps to bury him from whom he inherited—his father, or elder brother, or perhaps his mother's brother. As in the case of the estate of our mother's brother, Mwakalika. When Mwasilika (informant's elder brother) inherited the woman Kyanda, he did not perform the ritual for her. The woman was constantly ailing, but no one knew that she was suffering from this illness until they went to divine and found that she was ill from "the breath" because no ritual had been performed for her from the time she was inherited until now. So Mwasilika found a cow and called together all his dependants and his fellows in the village, and he killed the cow and told everyone about this illness. Then people "complained" (*alwajaje*), and said: "Indeed, may this illness finish." (It was neighbours who complained, not relatives.) From that time the woman concerned has never been ill again. So everyone says: "In truth, 'the breath of men' is very great."

"This illness is very serious, but it never kills people, though they are ill for a long time. If it is not discovered that this is the cause, the patient will be ill for a very long time, perhaps for two or three years. Yes, sometimes it kills when it has spread to the hereditand, but people very rarely die from this illness.

"It is often seen in connection with inheritance. Another case occurred in my country. A certain man built with us who was of a chief's lineage. He inherited from a relative but he did not kill a cow at the death ritual. The wife he inherited was constantly ill until they went to divine and found that it was "the breath of men" (which was making her ill) because he had not performed a ritual since he entered into his inheritance. So he also found a cow and called people (non-relatives) and all his descendants, and killed the cow, and his fellow villagers "complained" (*alwajaje*). But I do not know whether the illness finished or not. What I do know is that he found a cow—I saw it myself where it was lying there dead and people gathered, relatives, descendants, and neighbours.

"*Ingole* is a disease of children. It comes from the inside used by the mother of the child. It is commonly said that when a married

woman has been angry with her husband, and perhaps quarrelled with him, and has sworn at her husband by "the things" (i.e. the sex organs) of his mother, or perhaps his father, the child she bears will fall sick with *ingala*. It becomes very thin and does not grow. The disease is recognized when a child is very ill from infancy, and it is very thin but does not die. Then they say it is *ingala*. Sometimes they inquire of a diviner and the diviner reveals that it is ill of *ingala*.

"I remember a certain woman who was married to a man, Abayombe. This man had married two wives, and she of whom I speak was the third. This woman was very proud (*amalinga fye*) and was constantly quarrelling with her husband and her co-wives. When she quarrelled with her husband he got angry and beat her. Then she swore at him horribly, about "the things" of his mother or father. She said: "You! So and so of your father! So and so of your mother!" Then this woman bore a girl child and when it had grown a little it became very ill. It was very ill for a whole year. When it began to recover she quarrelled again with her husband and swore at him insultingly, and the child got ill again. So her husband (the father of the child) and she went to inquire of a diviner. The divination revealed *ingala*. It said: "Your wife has sworn at you about the things of your mother when you were quarrelling." When they got home the husband drove his wife away, saying: "Go to your father!" When she got home the woman told her father everything and he took millet and gave it to her to make beer with which to pay. So she brewed beer and brought it to her husband, saying: "I did wrong, my husband." Her husband called his fellows and they all drank the beer and expressed their anger (*ukwijaja*) and said: "May the child recover and grow well!"

"This happened when I was 13 or 14 years old. The girl (who was ill) is still alive; her body shows signs of not having grown properly.

"The disease comes from "the breath of men" because these insults were made publicly and others heard them. I do not think anything would happen if the insults were private, I am not sure."

A case of neighbours for neglect of rituals.
Lupembwile (young Christian man).

"If I do not do the (death) ritual properly for my father the death of my children is due to the case against me, the dispute with relatives and the curse of people—non-relatives (*amapepo mbalowano, ifipepo mbanda*).

"Sometimes the villagers (*amalimwe*) bind a man's loins so that he cannot beget children with his wife. They are both sterile. Husband

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(76) from ropes, that binding. The women were uncertain. "Yes, indeed," replied Mwalinje. "Whenever did women know how to perform an autopsy? They don't know how to do it. They only know how to close the corpse again, that's all."

A woman lay down with her head to that of the corpse under clothes. The other women told her to do this, saying: "At the head, at the head! You are both brave, you, you!"

The doctor removed the liver, two other parts, and the bile sack. This latter she squeezed out on to the leaves, saying: "Medicine, medicine, she drank much medicine." All these she wrapped up in leaves and buried in the foot of the grave.

It was explained that the ropes (*ingopi*) were those of Mwakinisile. Mwakinisile, the father, had gone mad (*alengapa ukipili*) and had drunk medicine before he had married this woman. "We forgot to give them both medicine later on. When he went mad we bound him with ropes to take him to the doctor."

(77) (It is believed that the kinsmen of one bound with ropes will suffer from the disease *ngogo* if treatment is not adequate.)

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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764 765 775 the lives and enter the dreams of their kinsmen; but the nature of their survival is uncertain.

775 765 A man, when he dies, is believed to join his ancestors. Until the end of the funeral rites, they say, he is on the way and if the ritual is not properly performed he does not reach them, but troubles the dreams and lives of the survivors until he is properly driven away. 'If you do not perform the ritual for your father or mother you may go mad or else have a slow and lingering death.'

777 775 767 Many of the younger pagans, however, are affected by Christian belief. Young men spoke confidently of going after death 'to a fine country with dancing and feasting and a chief to rule us'. But many old men scoff at such beliefs. 'They have learnt them from the missionaries—how do they know, have they been there to see?' Among some of the younger men also the ritual of death is less important than it used to be. As one Christian said: 'The pagans no longer fear to die away from home—they used to fear very much to die in a strange country (and many still do), they thought: "If I die far from home I shall never reach my ancestors, for people will not bury me properly." Nor do all the young men now fear if they fail to attend a father's funeral ritual.' 'We no longer believe in the old rituals,' said a sophisticated young pagan, 'because we see that the Christians do not do these things and nothing happens to them.'

764 753 754 An additional reason for fearing death is the Nyakyusa belief in the contagious character of many diseases. Death is thought to be caused sometimes by witchcraft, and sometimes by one of a variety of diseases. Of these diseases some are held to be hereditary and to run in families, and they are usually non-contagious; others, and they are usually contagious, are believed to be due to the sorcery of enemies. And the contagion is thought to be spread by a corpse. It is especially dangerous to relations; other people do not fear these diseases unless they actually hold the corpse in their arms, or dig the grave, or help to bury it, but all relations are afraid.

769 Besides the contagion of specific diseases, the corpse itself is held always to have a vaguely defined, but none the less fearful, contagion of its own. And, because of this, all who have had any close contact with the body go to bathe immediately after the burial. Those of the chief mourners who hold the body in their arms, the grave-diggers and those who get down into the grave to bury it, all go to bathe. 'Even when death is not due to a contagious disease

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Nyakyusa
Selya, Nshigwale

people say: *"Tukali shaleye anyake* (We have not yet bidden farewell to the shade)," *shaleye* being the word used for bidding a courteous farewell to departing guests. Mwainumo elaborated the point. He said: "The death ritual is a saying good-bye, it is to see off the dead man accompanying him on his way (*shamindilele*); to demonstrate that we have buried him indeed, and to pray that forgetfulness may now come on us." Another informant explained: "Touching the earth is to say "Good-bye, friend."'

The danger of madness was given as the reason both for the whole ritual and for many separate actions in it. 'You go mad if you do not shave after a death,' said the wife of the chief Mwalilejo. 'You go mad if you keep the hair of the corpse (*mwili ya mfinda*),' said Mwandisi, the old blind historian, and he went on: 'Yes, much madness comes from the shades if you have neglected the death ritual for a wife or for parents, and the ritual at puberty also. Madness comes from the shades and from Kyala. And if a woman refuses to perform the ritual for her husband who has died, and refuses to lie down with the heir, she also goes mad.' If someone does go mad the cause is usually said to be neglect of the death ritual or some mistake in its performance.

Other types of illness are also attributed to neglect of the death ritual. Kasitile was ailing and thought that his illness was due partly to the fact that he had not completed the death ritual for a relative. Mwilaba said of the sweeping in the ritual: 'They sweep round their legs lest their bodies become swollen and sick. It is said that their bodies will swell if they attend the ritual of someone else and this is done and they themselves have not been swept over.' Several informants mentioned 'a lingering and painful death' (a terror often spoken of by the Nyakyusa) as the penalty for neglecting a ritual, and the last part of the ritual is expressly interpreted as a prophylactic against the 'gasping cough'.

Finally, it is said that the crops will not flourish if the ritual is neglected. Kaloji, a village headman of Selya, was explicit on the point: 'If you do not bury your father properly the food will disappear. They (the diviners) will tell you to find something and when here has been left overnight outside in the banana grove you pray to the shade.' The fear that the crops will not flourish is not mentioned as frequently as the danger of madness, but it is a general notion.

The danger of madness or other illness coming on one is thought to be greatest if a man tastes the ritual food or beer, or is sprinkled

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1937 F7617 Ngonde F7617
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Soleja, Religion.

764 hair. It is the ritual we are performing, they are signs of widowhood (*fye bufwele*), of lamentation (*fye kwe*). The ashes are a sign of lamentation and the *ilingilangilwa* creeper is a sign of lamentation. Yes, all these things are part of the ritual, we cannot leave them out, it is taboo. If we did) those below [i.e. the shades] would be angry and say: 'They have startled me and caused me pain in the heart, they have injured the ritual by foolishness evil.'

764 *At the end the heir sleeps with the women in the house—before the*
765 *heir. He performs the ritual with them, the officiants wait for them*
[767] *and ask them: 'How was it?' If he says 'No,' they say: 'Kyala does not stand in the house.' They go and divine at a doctor's who says:' So-and-so is angry.'*

Question: Kyala does not stand in the house (*Kyala alema mpumbo*)?

Mwaseme: It is the shades, they say Kyala does not give support. Then again he performs the ritual (*ilungwala*, i.e. he attempts to have coitus) and they ask him: 'How was it?' They say: 'Yes, they (the shades) have stood with us, Kyala has stood with us.' [He gave both forms as alternatives: *batemele* and *Kyala emile*.] Then they clap their hands and raise the shout of triumph (*ululila*).

Question: Is that the cry: 'Oum, oum!'?

[764] Mwaseme: No, that's the cry of the hill people. With us it's taboo.
765 Then in the morning someone shouts: 'Mor has come.' They come out immediately and run away to the pasture-lands.

764 Question: Is this 'coming out' (*ukwaba*) the same as that in the coming out of child (*ukwaba*) and in the twin ceremony?

Mwaseme: Yes, they run because their legs were heavy (*nzito*) in the house, now they have grown lighter and are strong; because in the twin ceremony the seclusion in the house lasts four months, at the coming out of child two months, and that is hard, but at death it is only one, so it is light. But at death and the birth of twins it is the war (*ubwite*) [333] of the men. Is it not war with women? [*ubwite* is used here for sexual intercourse.] Then when they have come out they give one another 765 beer to drink in the doorway. The heir takes beer in his mouth and [768] spits it out and hands the vessel on to his wives and children. Each does the same. They do not swallow it. To do so causes diarrhoea. The man and his wives are burning. They have come from the hut. This giving one another to drink, when each spits and does not swallow, happens after the eating of messages of porridge on the road.* It is the same in the twin ritual except that whereas it is only the principals who give one another to drink at the death ritual, in the twin ritual not only they, but all relatives, and even non-relatives do it as well!

Question: How about the eating of millet porridge with powdered medicine on the road?

* No other informant mentioned this in the Mu'ngonde death ritual.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1937 F917 Ngonde F917
Nyakyusa
Selje, Mulungushi

Mwasumo: The oncoups of porridge stuck in the ground and sprinkled with powdered medicine which each oncoup and hive cannot that you should be heavy in your belly (*mucito mundi*) and not have diarrhoea, it is to make favour hard (not watery). Some we leave and bury [the end of each oncoup of porridge is left in the ground]; that means that people should step over it and take away the disease, may they have diarrhoea at their homes! They will get it really! 764 [755]

Quarrow: Why do the dead man's sisters admonish their sisters-in-law, his widows? 407 764

Mwasumo: Because we have all met together. They say: 'Do not grudge him food, go on cooking for him. He dies of hunger! Begin again! And why do you not cook for us when we come? You grudge us food?' We could them very much and they weep tears.

Quarrow: They say in Selya that you both drive away a shade and bring him back to the house. 764 775

Mwasumo: No, we drive him away, we do not bring him back to the house.

Quarrow: But you go to the stream with a stem of bananas, a hen and a fresh strip of bark, the bananas you throw away, but you come back with the hen and the bark. Is that the shade?

Mwasumo: These do not come back home. The officiant has them and takes them to her house. . . .

The stem of bananas we throw in the stream, it is sickness, it is the corpse, it goes to Kyala there. The hen and the bark we give to the doctor, the officiant, because it is she who caught hold of the sickness. She is always an unrelated person, not a relative; we pay her. If we have not performed the ritual we can read, the shades have not come out, they are still there within.

Quarrow: You performed the ritual for Lubalaski's child yesterday? 764

Mwasumo: Yes, she was our grandchild. We grandparents don't matter, we carry out the ritual but it's not important; if, however, it is our own child [who has died] then it is taken. It is taken up to the point that connections are not relations. [A grandchild in this context—though not in other contexts—is treated as not a relative]. The ritual must be performed for all relations (*abalume*). . . . [403]

First the stem of bananas and then the millet and pumpkin seeds are passed between the straddled legs of the principals. The winnowing basket (containing millet and seeds) is pushed along with the officiant's elbow. In performing this ritual we finish the sorting of men and women, for that which comes out of the man in front [i.e. the semen] is the shades, when the participants have spat out we drive the shades away. If we have not performed the ritual we go read. The shades have not come out but are still within. When, however, we have finished, then they have come out of the body. But they come again, we always have them. (*Apa mbenyapala mbombeya mbishi mapumbula mwishala, pa*

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 F7417 Ngonde F7417
Nyakyusa
Culture

Questioner: Where is the one who has just died? 764

Mwasumbwe: It is him the shade has brooded over. We say: 'You 775
shade, look after this child of yours, care for him and don't abandon him. He also should be a shade, let the others speak to him in the future.' When we sing 'Farewell . . .' we lament him who has died.

Questioner: And the trampling dance (*shakama ingoye*)?

Mwasumbwe: We say: 'You shade, care for your fellow, don't desert him, may he be with you in your body.' We trample the ground because the shade is in the ground, he is within the body, he is underground, everywhere.

Questioner: What do you mean by 'in your body'?

Mwasumbwe: Because the shade has created us, we came from him, we die, we go there to him; not to others, but to him.

Questioner: The two leaves and hearing and saying: '*Syoko, syoko of father, syoko, syoko of mother*'?

Mwasumbwe: Syoko is the name we have been given for the shade. We say: 'The shade, the shade of father, the shade, the shade of mother!' because since a woman has died we speak to the shade as if the husband was 'father' (*ise*) who brooded over his wife. He has brooded over all us living, both me and my wife. That is what these leaves are [i.e. the husband and wife]. We speak to that man who was first buried, saying: 'Perhaps you are within, perhaps you are beneath, oh shade!' We speak to that first man who was the first to die.

Sweeping the house is that it may be clean (*mwela*). Before that it is [783]
dirty. . . .

The shade brooded both over the dead and over me, the living; he brooded over the dead who is with him and over me who am alive; I am in him—we all are. . . .

Questioner: Why the water on the roof? 764

Mwasumbwe: If we neglect this then a child will go mad, he runs 753
off to the water and the water comes into his nose [i.e. he drowns] because we have not given him water in the doorway of the little hut there. If we neglect something then the child goes mad and runs off and catches hold of faeces, he smears faeces on his body and urinates into his hands and washes with the urine.

Questioner: Why does the shade want him to do these filthy things? 764

Mwasumbwe: Because if we do not perform the ritual for him and 775
do not care for him we do not remember him, then he says: 'Since you do not remember me this child will also get dirty, because I have got dirty underground, I am dead. See, you buried me! The earth has entered my mouth and eyes, why do you not care for me?'

Questioner: But even if you do treat him ritually, still the earth is in his mouth! How is he satisfied?

Mwasumbwe: Because this shadow (*ngongole*) [pointing in explanation to the shadows of the banana trees] is what we care for, it is the

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
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for the ritual. We think that when she has slept with her new husband she is full (*asile*) and if she gives us food it will make us ill.

MWAMOWANDA: The new husband gives us relatives a disease by impregnating the girl, he who is no relative of ours, the new husband. *Ingotolo* is an illness.

ii. *Kakune's interpretation.* (Recorded by G. W.)

KAKUNE: Yes, if we do not perform the ritual the children run mad. They speak foolishly and deliriously, they run about wildly wearing leaves, they eat filth. But they do not fight with their fellows—that is what those do who have the madness of Kyala. It is these of whom we say: 'Perhaps Kyala loved them.'

QUESTION: Why the first washing?

KAKUNE: That is to get rid of the disease, the filth, for they held the corpse in their hands. They do not eat the ritual food until they have washed.

QUESTION: Why the eating of porridge?

KAKUNE: Because of the tears we have wept. We have mourned him; now let us eat and strengthen our bodies again.

QUESTION: Why are beans thrown into the pot in the evening?

KAKUNE: These beans, which we throw into the pot, saying: 'This is my father's death', are an ending of the ritual. They remain all night in the house after they have been cooked, and the shades come and eat. In the morning the doctor [*sangaga*, i.e. the officiant] washes us again with powdered medicine and we eat the beans and finish them. We use beans in the ritual for that is the food which our father hoed. We think: 'Our father has died, he will never hoe for us again', and so we say: 'This is the death of my father.' So then the shade of our father comes at night and tastes the food and says to us: 'I, your father, have died, you have mourned for me; live you yet awhile, do not come quickly to death; and may you hoe plenty of food and have no hunger.' If we leave out this ritual with the beans the fertility of our gardens disappears and we have great hunger, we eat nothing.

QUESTION: Why the circling to the harp and crumbling oil-seeds?

KAKUNE: The ointment (made from the oil-seeds) is to finish the ritual. The song (*ukalende*) is to say good-bye, to the shade, it means 'farewell', it is to drive him away. We circle round because our father was an active man, he walked round seeing his friends, he danced; that is why we circle round the fire. [In Kakune's family they do not cry the war shout of triumph, they only dance to the harp.]

QUESTION: Why the pebbles? [I told him what Mwasalemba had said and he agreed heartily.]

KAKUNE: Yes, that's it! We throw them away, this means 'We have driven you away now.'

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 F317 Ngonde F317
Nyakyusa
Kukwa

porridge—sausages of porridge are buried in the ground and bitten off by the principals who stoop down to do it.

QUESTION: What does it mean?

KAGUNE: It means that we are about to honour them; they eat, and he whom we have buried also remains below, he also eats, we bury the sausage in the earth and we say we are burying him also, then he will fear to come to the house.

QUESTION: And this porridge is a symbol of the filth which those who run mad eat?

KAGUNE (laughing): Yes, because if we omit to do these things the children become feeble, their hearts say "Ho! ho!" [panting and excited] and they rush off to the road and eat dirt (*mindi*).

QUESTION: Why should the shades do this to them? How are they interested in dirt (*mindi*)?

KAGUNE: I don't know. We say it is because we have not accompanied them on the road and on account of this the shade is very angry and says: "We shall see whether their children flourish!" He has bewitched them (*abalopile*).

QUESTION: And what about the circling round with the harp and the trampling at the fire?

KAGUNE: That is not very important, Mwaipaja [G. W.], it is because he cultivated food and danced at beer drinks when he was alive, so we dance for him now that he is dead. . . . A widow must lie with her husband the night before she comes to do the (*ingotolo*) ritual, and she comes with his filth on her, she does not wash. If she comes without having lain with him the night before then we all get the disease. The disease comes from the new husband, it comes from his seed, the seed that begets us men. When his seed enters her womb then she is heavy (*nite*) and if she eats or drinks out of our dishes and pots while we are empty (*kusui*), before we have stopped ourselves with medicines, then she gives us the disease. She has not given us the protective medicine (*mdwepe*).

If a woman changes from one husband to another and both are alive, there is no danger and no ritual. It is death that brings the danger, because that man [her first husband] has died; he has died and rotted below, and from that disease comes. The disease only comes from this situation. If no relative has died there is no *ingotolo*. But if my wife has run off with another man and then comes back to me with his semen in her, then I take some powdered medicine and eat some and throw a little on the fire, and if I do not do this then my legs will hurt, I shall be unable to walk properly, and my body will become weak. Neither she nor her relatives take medicine, nor does her new husband, if she goes to him and he pays for her and takes her. He just marries her.

If the widow is left with a sucking child and is empty [*kusui*: i.e. her

L. Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1937 F'317 Mgonda F'317
Nyakyusa
Kukwe

new husband has not been sleeping with her?, then at first, before she lies with him, we (her relatives) eat with her. But when the child leaves the breast and her husband begets another then she comes to perform the ritual. Otherwise we cannot eat with her. And so with a pregnant widow—at first we eat with her but when the child is born and he has weaned and her new husband begets another she comes to perform the ritual.

The new husband must send a bull or a sheep with his spear, and we who drink the beer divide the meat, saying: 'Thank you, you have nourished us.' Yesterday he sent you., and I, the doctor, got it. If it had been a bull I would have got some meat. The husband does not come himself, but he sends a friend to bring the woman. This friend does not eat or drink the medicine, but he drinks the beer without medicine and the cassava we cook. [In the ritual just completed] Mwandembo provided three pots of beer—we drank one before and two after the ceremony. That was what the men were waiting for.

No, it never happens that one who has drunk the medicine of *ingonde* falls sick of it afterwards, never.

The spear is taken and kept by the girl's brother at the command of her father, who says: 'Take this spear, your sister has brought it.' It is a symbol (*chimanyilo*) of kinship, it is like the spear with which a girl was betrothed in the old days. At the betrothal the lover would stick the spear in the ground, the girl pulled it up and took it to her father, sticking it into the ground before him, and he, if he agreed, told her brother to take it up. And if there is any dispute later about cattle then the spear is proof of agreement. It has the same significance at betrothal and at the *ingonde* ritual. Sometimes the heir has to bring cattle that have not yet been paid by the dead man. When the woman's brother takes the spear into the house at the *ingonde* ritual, that means: 'Now you[1] have entered into the house—your house—so we bring you in.' And then she can go in.

The calling out of 'Thief' is a custom in the ritual, but it is like a song, it's not important. The firewood is shown to the woman and a bean and a grain of maize are put into a crack of the wood. That means that the ritual is complete.

No, there is no extra safety in coming to the ceremony; those who drink at home are equally protected!

III. *Evidence of other informants*

CURRENT TALE: Some people have been told by those who have run mad, that they see a man who comes to them sometimes. When that man is with them then they lose the sense of what they are doing. The

[1] It was not clear from the context whether 'you' referred to groom or bride. The symbolism suggests the act of marriage but of this we have no direct evidence.

S. Wilson E-9 (1934-1938)1957 F'317 Ngombe F'317
Nyakyusa
Golwe, Mwitagwale

365
369 new home, and her mother-in-law provides her with fire and a pot.

783 After the bride has had full intercourse with her husband she cannot return home, or see her own parents, until she has taken them the ritual dibulga. After sexual intercourse she wipes her husband's genitals with her hands, then wipes them on a fowl and some millet: these together form the dibulga. In the morning she goes off without washing—'with the filth of intercourse on her'—to her parents' house, taking the fowl and millet with her. The fowl is killed on a path and cooked with dipidi medicine and, if the bride is the eldest daughter of one of the father's first two wives, her father and mother eat it together. Her mother eats alone if she is a younger daughter, or the mother is a junior wife. If the father is a chief the husband may kill a young bull and beef is eat in place of the hen.

839 After eating the dibulga her parents resume intercourse[1] which has been taken from the time the girl first menstruated. If no hen is brought because the husband is poor, the parents still resume sexual intercourse, but the bride, when she visits her home, must not take water from her mother's pot. Someone else draws for her and she drinks it outside from a separate calabash. If she drinks inside, or if her mother uses the calabash she has used, it is believed that her mother will get diarrhoea. She also avoids her father's bed and mat.

606 With the ritual of marriage must be included the negative ritual of avoidance between a woman and her husband's father and between those identified with him or her. The taboo applies from the time of betrothal or, if the girl has been betrothed as an infant, from well before she reaches puberty, and forbids father-in-law and daughter-in-law ever to look at one another or meet face to face on the pathway, or enter the same house, much less speak together. As we have seen, a similar taboo applies between the bride and her own father during her seclusion, but is relaxed when he has given her a gift. Between a woman and her father-in-law, however, it is never relaxed, except among the more sophisticated Christians. A myth of origin tells of a case of incest between father-in-law and daughter-in-law which led to the establishment of the

[1] Kaduka maintained that if the mother has not resumed the menopause the parents do not lie together until the daughter's pregnancy is apparent. 'For the mother to conceive before the daughter is forbidden, but old women are finished duty.' Mwakisenda denied any danger to mother conceiving before daughter.

would never dry up.' Kaisile said: 'The work of the midwife and
[191] dipidi are the same, they are together. The heavy cows will over-
step the girl, they are going to injure her so that she is barren,
constantly miscarrying, with painful periods.' Lyandilebo, a
woman doctor, and exceptionally intelligent, said: 'The bride
[192] uses the dipidi medicine because she is empty (*bume*). So she
washes and eats beasons with dipidi. If she does not wash with it
she will have diarrhoea.'

[191] The dipidi is also said to make a bride 'patient and polite'. 'If
[177] the girl did not wash with the powdered medicine (*dipidi*) she
might be rude and proud when she went to her husband's home
and insult men there.' This was the statement of Mwakwelebeja,
an old commoner particularly well versed in matters of ritual, and
it was separately confirmed both by his wife and by Lyandilebo,
the woman doctor, but not everyone knew the connection. Mwa-
lebeja, the chief, who was present when Mwakwelebeja gave his
explanation, said: 'Really! I never knew that!' and his wives,
when applied to, said: 'We don't know. The mothers have died'
(this though some of them were past middle age).

[63] [191] [191] Angonilwike identified the *dipidi* medicine with the blood of a
lineage and a bride's treatment with it with the union in marriage.
He said:

> As soon as a girl grows up people begin to think about her bearing
> children. They say: 'The mother-iron is discharged, the blood for
> bearing children has come.' When they grind and brew beer in her
> honour, they do it in honour of her 'iron' [i.e. menstrual blood]. They
> give her medicines for disciplining her in the lineage of her husband.
> When the mothers hear they cry: 'Oum, oum, it has fruited! (*Ibeto, ibeto, ifipidi*).' The girl is given a bundle of the medicine, powdered, and
> is made to wear a belt of bark-cloth with the powder in it; the medicine
> is brought from the husband's home by his mothers. The husband, as it
> were, says: 'That is my blood [or semen] which I have sent to her.'
> The little bundle is the symbol (*ikimapele*) of the child she will bear, the
> belt with medicine on it means that the mothers 'iron' belongs to
> the blood of their husband. The powdered medicine is brought by the
> husband's mother. A man's chief wife always has a bamboo flask or a
> gourd full of medicine of their lineage (*ya kikolelo lyaku*), powdered ready
> for use. If she dies it goes to the second wife, if the husband dies to the
> first wife of the eldest son, and by her it is distributed as need. The
> powdered medicine is the blood (*mekundaga*[1] *ya dipa*).

[1] i.e. the powder made from the *dipidi*.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 F'N17 Ngonde F'N17
Nyakyusa
Colyn, Ms Ngonde

have thought of it now, this is the cow.' Then, in the evening, the mother's brother blows out water in the banana grove and prays mouth to the fathers. And when he has prayed he says: 'Send the girl to a doctor to drink medicine.' Then the girl bears a child. The pagans say of us Christians whom we have children without performing the ritual: 'You have a medicine, you are baptized with a medicine.'

Mwakitolela confirmed that the mother's brother, like the father, may prevent a girl bearing a child.

Yes, it is so, if I do not give marriage-cattle for my wife our child will not bear. We go to divine and the oracle catches hold of my wife saying that the fathers are angry. We ask what they are angry about, and the answer is 'cattle'. Then I, the father of the girl, go with a cow and leave it and return. My wife and daughter remain there. They pray and pray and the girl conceives.

It is clear, therefore, that the shades are present in intercourse and control conception. At marriage the shade of her father must 'move aside a little' so that the bride may conceive, and she herself becomes dangerous to her mother (and in a lesser degree to her father) because she has mingled her blood with that of another lineage. Mingling the blood of different lineages is dangerous and a bride can safely meet her mother only after performing a ritual in which her parents, as well as herself, become 'one flesh' with her husband. 'When a bride brings a hen and millet to her mother it is to say: "Mother, I have wiped my husband's genitals, I have grown up."' All our informants were agreed that this *ilibalego* or *ilibako* (both words are used) is to safeguard the mother's health, particularly to prevent her suffering from diarrhoea. Mwandisi's statement was clear:

In the puberty ritual, when a bride has come from her husband, having lain with him, she catches hold of a little millet and a fowl without washing herself and carries them to her mother. The mother eats it with the fowl that her belly may be firm. If the daughter does not bring these things, then, when she drinks from the same calabash as her mother, she oversteps her mother, who has diarrhoea. Yes, the illness comes from the shades because she has come hot from the bed. . . . This diarrhoea comes from the belly when those below are angry and those above also. They say: 'The mother has overstepped the child' or 'The child has overstepped the mother'. If a girl has reached puberty we, the parents, do not come together until she has gone to her husband and lain with him. If we have intercourse we

2: Wilson E-S (1934-1938)1957 F'N17 Ngonde F'N17
Nyakyusa
Selga, Mulungushi

831 ceremony our child, she will be barren and not bear children, but when
835 she has lain with her husband then we two lie together again.
787
*787 Kasitile identified the hen with the body of the girl, the millet
834 with the seed of her husband, and a daughter going to the back of her mother's hut (*kaufe*), or drinking out of the common calabash, as meeting with her mother.

If she does this before she has brought a fowl she soils her mother. Her mother develops diarrhoea. That is getting rid of the dirt (*kukunga ubupyisi*). . . . The mother's diarrhoea is like that from adultery. If my wife lies with a man in the bush, and I lie with her also, she soils the food which I eat with her, it is dirty, and I have diarrhoea, it is to get rid of the filth. . . . Yes, even though we do not lie together, I get a little diarrhoea, the filth of my wife.

QUESTION: Is the *ilibalgo* to drive away the shade again?

KASITILE: No, it is something else. It is to save the mother that she may not have diarrhoea and may not become weak.

781 The explanation given of the Kukwe *ilibalgo* rite makes clear
785 that it is a symbolic mingling of 'the blood' of son-in-law and mother-in-law, which makes contact between them (through the bride) safe.

781 Failure to bring the *ilibalgo* is thought sometimes to result
785 in very serious illness. One of the wives of our neighbour,
793 Mwakitolela, was delirious. We asked what the cause was. He replied:

Her daughter reached puberty and went to her husband, but refused to drink with her mother. She just came and took water in the calabash cup, she brought nothing from her husband. . . . If the husband is poor a girl brings a fowl for drinking with her mother. . . . The divination said: 'It's the girl.'

QUESTION: Why did she not bring a hen from her husband?

MWAKITOLELA: He is not a man of wisdom, he's very harsh, and a fool.

881 After the *ilibalgo* has been eaten by her parents a bride is no
885 longer dangerous to them, and she, fortified by the various treat-
406 ments with *undemila* and *ikipiki* medicines, no longer fears the 'heavy ones'. The critical periods of first menstruation and first intercourse are past. But the rule of avoidance between her and her father-in-law (and those identified with him) continues through life and is directly associated by the Nyakyusa with the

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 F311? Ngonde F311?
Nyakyusa
Kaffir

phasis that 'if the bride does not wash with powdered medicine she will go mad and she will bury children'.

Syongo, the officiant for all the rituals in Porekere's lineage, said:

If a girl goes mad, we say, if we have not treated her: 'We neglected the ritual, let us treat her.' She runs about aimlessly and makes bundles of filth. But if we have treated her we say: 'Perhaps Kyala has gone away from us. See! Nothing has been omitted, we have treated her.' And if she does not bear a child as her husband's heir in-laws say to her: 'Did your father and mother not treat you?'

MWAKAMBWA (a middle-aged pagan): It is said that if she eats food with her fellows who sleep with their husbands they will harm (*sweregi*) her, and she has diarrhoea. When she has been given powdered medicine, then she eats with them. . . . To lie on powdered medicine which has been sprinkled on the ground is to give the bride weight (*ubwiti*), because if it is not done those who are with their husbands will contemn her and she will have diarrhoea.

PORECKERE'S WIVES: In the old days we put medicine in her porridge so that she would not run away from her husband . . . not now. It's European times now.

QUESTION: In Selya it is said that if she is not given powdered medicine she will be proud.

WIVES: Yes, here too. And if the girl is proud we beat her.

MWAKAMBWA: Washing and catching in her hands the water that falls from her husband's hands has two meanings. In some families the husband and wife wash separately, in others they wash together. In either case the first meaning is present, in the second both meanings. It is said that when someone has not washed in the puberty ritual his or her children will die, for that water (with which he neglected to wash) will enter the child's stomach and kill it. The water is in the child's stomach but its symptoms are those of diarrhoea. The mobile girl catching water in her hands teaches us that the woman will receive everything. The man is like the upper grindstone, the woman like the nether grindstone (we speak of intercourse), which means that the woman receives the semen which comes from the man.

Making fire by friction is a symbol of procreation.[1] If the fire does not kindle we say the couple are sterile. Two fire-sticks are used, one is the man the other the woman, and the fire is the child. The sawdust made by the rubbing is the semen.

KAJIMBA: If the fire does not come the man is sterile and the girl will quarrel with her husband and perhaps run away. It does not mean she will be barren with other men.

[1] *Ukupyaa*: to make fire by friction; *ukupyaa*: to masturbate.

2: Wilson E-9 (1934-1938)1937 F'317 Ngonde F'317
Nyakyusa
K.u.Kwili

blood of another lineage mingles with hers, but it has not reached her mother because they have not met. To drink water together from one calabash is to meet. Then the mother has diarrhoea because her body is not accustomed to the blood of another lineage. To have diarrhoea is to go bad, to expel (ukusopa) the filth. The *ishuko* of the fowl is the body of the groom which mingles with the body of the girl's parents that they may be one blood with him.

Thus, not only husband and wife, but also parents and son-in-law become one flesh.

As in Soiya, a direct connection is made between the parents receiving a bull for the bride's virginity, and her bearing a child to her husband. Mwanakwaha explained: 'Kyala together with the shades have made the girl grow up. If the girl runs off with her husband and I, the father, have not received cattle, then the earth is angry, the shades say: "We shall see if she will flourish there." Then the girl does not conceive, and the diviner says: "The shades are angry." The groom's people bring cattle, then I, the father, pray for my child and she conceives, her belly swells.'

CHAPTER V

THE RITUAL OF BIRTH*

§42 Kyala (or Lwembe) and the shades create desire in men and women and control conception; when the shades are angry women do not conceive—this is one of the main tenets of pagan Nyakyusa cosmology, and it is combined with a limited knowledge of physiology. It is clearly understood that conception cannot take place without intercourse, and that gestation in humans lasts for nine months, but it is believed that repeated intercourse is necessary [837] for conception, and formerly, if a man found his wife pregnant after having lain with her only once, he accused her of adultery.

[838] (a) *Taboos of procreation*

The preservation of children is an ultimate value of Nyakyusa §42 society and the accepted end of marriage, but it is regarded as dangerous under certain conditions and is hedged about with •763 taboos. These are enforced so that both parents and children may be healthy; a breach of them is thought to result in violent diarrhoea, as well as monstrously swollen legs and weakness in men, general debility in children, and miscarriage or an excessive menstrual flow in women. The onus of observing them falls primarily on women, though their husbands must also co-operate, and a breach of taboo is treated as immoral, for it is believed to endanger the life, or health, or property of others.

§31 Certain general conceptions underlie the taboos. The first is that of *ubupali*, filth, which is held to come from the sex fluids, menstruation, and childbirth, as well as from a corpse, and the blood of a slain enemy. All these are felt to be both disgusting and dangerous, and the sex fluids are held to be particularly dangerous to an infant, hence the taboo on husband and wife resuming intercourse very soon after childbirth.

§46 At first, when the child is very young, we think it very bad for the parents to sleep together at all, because when the child is very young

* This account came from a score or more women not cited individually, as well as from our regular informants on ritual whose names are mentioned.

L. Wilson E-9 (1934-1938)1957 F'X17 Ngonde F'X17
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the women live constantly to handle it and if, just after intercourse, she has to do this without time to wash first, then the child, we think, will get diarrhoea or grow thin. Women always wash very carefully in the mornings after intercourse, both for the sake of the children and the husband. If the woman touches food unwashed after intercourse we think it will make her husband sick, and he will get unbearably fat. If a child is old enough to play by itself . . . so that the wife can wash properly before attending to it, then it is all right for the couple to have intercourse, but not for the woman to become pregnant again yet. She should not do that until the child is weaned."[1]

Contact with menstrual blood or a menstruating woman is believed to be dangerous to a man, more particularly to a warrior, hence there is an absolute taboo on intercourse during menstruation (for five to eight days) and restrictions on cooking for a man. A menstruating woman does not blow up the fire on which her husband's food is cooking, or squeeze the food to test whether it is ready, or scrape ash off bananas or sweet potatoes she has roasted, or serve food, for 'her breath comes from her belly and it is dirty; her belly is dirty on account of the menstrual blood. All her body is dirty. She does not wash. When she washes, you, the husband, think that the flow has dried up and catch hold of her!' So a woman who is menstruating fans the fire instead of blowing it, and calls a co-wife or a child to serve the food she has cooked. She does not even crouch over the fire to warm herself, lest she contaminate it; and she neither uses the common calabash cup for drinking nor scoops water from the household water jar with her hand, but fashions a cup for herself from a leaf, or has her own little water-pot. She avoids passing behind or shaking hands with a man; she avoids a new-born infant; she keeps well away from cattle, neither passing behind them when they are in the homestead nor clearing out dung from the byre; she avoids touching medicines or entering the house of a doctor; and she avoids cutting pumpkin or pumpkin leaves, or picking them. These taboos are enforced lest she injure men or infants or cattle or medicines, for 'she is dirty' and her 'dirt' is thought to cause purging and to rot medicines, and she,

[1] The 'flow' is on the wife because she cleanses her husband with her hands.

[2] Coitus interruptus is practised until the mother is ready to conceive again. "Formerly it was taboo to make a woman pregnant before her previous child was four or five years old. Her husband's sisters made a great case about it. The child must have time to run before a younger brother was born. We said: 'How can a woman carry two children?' Now she becomes pregnant again when the elder is two. Of those who bear again before then it is said: 'They kill the elder child.'" (Statement of Nsajigwa, an elderly man.)

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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for her part, fears lest the medicines with which men protect themselves and their cattle may injure her, causing her menstrual flow to 'last a whole month'. She avoids pumpkins lest she suffer from a small growth in the vagina called a 'pumpkin' and bear sickly children. 'It is said that this disease is due to women picking or eating pumpkins when they are menstruating . . . the menstrual blood resembles the pumpkin and they fight together.'

If a wife fails to warn her husband that she is menstruating and permits him to have intercourse with her, he will be furiously angry and may even divorce her saying: 'You are soiling me, get out!'

Any contact with a menstruating woman is believed to cause him suffering. 'His legs become swollen and painful and he is very tired.' 'Strength leaves the man.' 'He sits back weakly; he has no speed in running.' Kasitile explained:

> The danger of menstrual blood is that it is filthy; it is an illness. Formerly, if a foolhardy man took his wife when she was menstruating, when he went to war, he fell. We others said: 'Why were you vanquished? Did you enter when your wife was unwell? Do you not know that it is a very serious illness?'

Angombwike added:

> Formerly, the fear was greater than it is to-day. If a man made love to a menstruating woman they said he would fall ill *of ivilolo*, an illness for which there was no remedy. His belly ached and his body grew red; he just lay down. His face swelled and his legs ached. Now pagans are not so much afraid of menstruation; they have listened to the Christians.

Asked why sleeping with a menstruating woman should make a man weary, informants linked the danger from menstrual blood with the danger that bears a husband when his wife commits adultery, and the 'blood' of two men mixes in the woman's womb. Menstrual blood is not so dangerous to a husband as the 'blood' of another man, but yet it is 'filthy'. One of Mwakisonde's wives said:

> My husband gets tired if he sleeps with me when I am menstruating because he has given us our menstrual blood; it is that which has entered into me; there are two bloods, his and mine.

Mwambuputa, a village headman, elaborated further:

> If my wife has committed adultery and cooks my food or draws water for me, then my legs are weary and I also have diarrhoea. If she

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scorpion because when she is menstruating, or conceals that she is menstruating and we have intercourse, then my legs are tired, but I do not have diarrhoea, because it is my blood; she is my relative (above groups), she is my wife, her blood and mine are one. But when she has lain with a man in the bush there is his blood; I have diarrhoea to get rid of it; the food which she cooks for me is dirty, she has made it filthy, I have diarrhoea and get rid of it, she converges me. And also if she has concealed that she is menstruating and we have intercourse, I am constipated. To converge is to vomit—but since the blood is mine I do not get rid of it. That menstrual blood is very dirty!

If I have always been all right and strong, and I find that I get tired walking and hoeing, I think: 'What is it? See, always I was all right, and now I am very tired.' My friends say: 'It is women, you have lain with one who was menstruating.' And if I eat food and start diarrhoea they say: 'It's women, they have committed adultery.' My wives deny it. We go to divine, and one is caught; if she agrees that's that, but if she denied it, formerly we went to the poison ordeal. The woman drank alone, not I. If she vomited then I was defeated, the woman was good, but if it caught her then her father paid one cow.

What we feared greatly in the old days, Mwaipaja, was war. We feared to die. For if my fellow in the village committed adultery with my wife then, when we went to war, we both died; if we went to fight at Mwangomo's [a neighbouring chiefdom], both he and I would be speared. Then people were astonished and said: 'Why, here so-and-so and so-and-so died? Perhaps they both lay with the same woman.' For this reason we drove adulterers from the village, and for this reason the chief was angry with an adulterer, saying: "This is my place! Why do you kill my people?" '

Others confirmed Mwambopasa's statement that adultery led to death in battle:

Formerly, when there was war, if your fellow made love to your wife in secret and you all went to fight, you died on one day on account of the women.

Mwandisi linked the disquiet in a man's belly with the anger of the shades seated there.

If a woman has gone behind the house with another man and comes and cooks food for her husband, blowing up the fire and cooking for him, then the food turns round in his stomach and says: 'Is this my kinsman?' She made friends with others behind the house and cooked for them [i.e. committed adultery]. So then the man develops diarrhoea because the food turned round in his stomach. He falls down on the road, he falls down in battle.

§77 Question: The spirits are angry?
•§78 Answer: Yes, they say: "That woman for whom we gave marriage-
779 cattle has overstepped her husband." Yes, it is the shades who are angry in his belly.

§82 Kakuse, a doctor, made it clear that the danger to the husband
§87 when his wife committed adultery came from the semen of another
783 man entering her.

If your wife commits adultery you get very tired on a journey, you suffer from diarrhoea, in the old days we fell in war.

Question: What if the adulterer practises coitus interruptus?

Kakuse: Yes, if the man is clever he withdraws and the semen falls to the ground. If he always withdraws when he has intercourse with my wife, then I escape, nothing happens. The woman is like a child. See, when your wife who has not yet attained puberty plays with young men on the veld it is no matter. Do they create a child with her? No! But if she is an adulteress he is there in her, and I am there in her, and Kyala says: 'Ha! Are there two?' And he spares you, the owner of the woman. You are soiled by going to the woman; that is filth. But if I catch an adulterer with my wife, even if he has practised *coitus interruptus*, I am angry and kill him—there is jealousy! But as for diarrhoea, I do not suffer from it.

§97 The most dangerous adultery of all, according to the Nyakyusa,
§98 is that of a man with his father's wife. Angumbwike explained:

If a man dies and his son has been lying with his wives in secret, whether with or without his permission, the son is very much afraid to approach his father's place. If he goes near or touches the corpse he will himself die, for he is one flesh with his father; their blood has mingled in the woman's belly. He keeps a long way away and so do the wives with whom he has lain. The leading men of the village are told [782] about it and a doctor is fetched and the son and the wives involved are taken to a waterfall and treated there. If he is the eldest son a younger brother kills the cows meanwhile. Then he comes back to the homestead and kills a cow himself. While you were away in Europe I saw a case of this with my own eyes. A man died whose son had been lying with his wives. As soon as the son approached his father's place he fell down sick to death. People picked him up and rushed him away to a distance. There he began to breathe a little easier. They took him to a [783] waterfall and treated him and he recovered, more or less. He is still unwell from time to time. It is not madness, just illness. And if, before the father's death, such a son approaches his father, the old man gets very ill indeed and the elder wives turn the son out of the house. There is none of this trouble if a brother [either a full brother or a half-brother]

[96] Ukukinda means to yam, to surpass, and ukukinga [overstepping]. In its metaphorical use, implies that 'one has power and the other is weak, so the powerful one does some injury to the weak one'.

[97] [98] [99] Fourthly, as was made apparent in the puberty ritual, it is held to be dangerous to 'mix bloods'. Adultery is not only an infringement of the exclusive rights of a husband, but it may injure him directly, causing him to have diarrhoea, which is a 'getting rid of the filth' due to contact with a strange 'blood'. It was implied that intercourse with a menstruating woman was in some sense 'mixing bloods' also, and the danger to parents of contact with a newly-married daughter before a precautionary ritual has been performed, stems from the same thing; the parents, through their daughter, are brought into contact with the blood of another lineage, that of the new son-in-law.

[99] Besides being 'heavy' and therefore liable to 'swamp' others, a pregnant woman is thought to reduce the quantity of any grain she approaches, for the foetus within her is voracious and matches it. Therefore neither she nor her husband (who participates in her condition) may approach other people's millet[1] or beans or oil-seeds spread out to dry, or speak to those who are reaping or grinding or stamping or brewing, without making a gesture of good-will by spitting on a pebble or knotting a leaf, and throwing it into the heap of grain. The sanction is fear of a miscarriage, for the owners of the food may have used medicines 'so that the food may be much and people be astonished'. Her own crops a pregnant woman may handle freely, and a chief's wife does not observe the taboo in her own village.

Two or three quotations will make these conceptions clearer:

Ambwembwe: When my wife has conceived they say we are both 'heavy', both my wife and I. Then, if oil-seeds or millet are out drying in the sun, they tell us not to speak. 'You are heavy ones,' they say. So we are silent. They say that if there is talking we will catch hold of the oil-seeds or millet, and it will diminish. Yes, I must avoid the grain even though I am alone, because I am heavy.

Kasewa: Maize does not vanish but millet and beans. The child which is being made bewitches them; they disappear. . . . The child has opened its mouth wide, its jaws gape.[2] It is that child which is being

[100] [1] Some hold that millet was the only grain affected, others maintained that maize was also.

[2] Ukusewa ngwakuvile ukupanda akanwa. Ukupanda is used of the gaping jaws of a crocodile.

2: Wilson E-S (1934-1938)1957 F'017 Ngonde F'017
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§95 this is eaten by the relative who receives the dikolaga, after he has finished it. He who receives the dikolaga buries it, and while he is doing so he looks up country to the origin of the Nyakyusa, who moved down to the plain (kuNgonde); the officiator then tells them all to look up country. . . . The mother of twins warns her family and it answers: 'I am all right now, I am clean, I am your friend, Kyala had bound me. . . .' On reaching home the women waits on the path . . . her husband (who has been with the dikolaga to his people) likewise waits for his wife. . . . Then they both advance together and enter, and go into their house [not the temporary hut] and eat and drink together. This eating and drinking together means that their ritual is finished; they say: 'We have survived that rubbishy Kyala who had bound us (ngwaile kwa jaKyala ili ja ngilaile).'[1] They eat the food which has come from their own families together, first drinking together the beer. This is the end of the twin ritual as it has always been performed. People avoid the parents of twins for they say: 'The beings clothe into our family.'

§95 From the time the twins are born until he moves their mother
§96 ritually, intercourse with any woman is taboo to the father of twins. After the ritual he may live with the mother (though she should not conceive again until the twins are running about), but he cannot visit his other wives. Only when she has given birth again—and had a normal delivery—is he free to live with his other wives. Should he break this taboo it is believed that the wife
•[79] with whom he breaks it will fall grievously ill with swelling of the legs and belly, and her father is entitled to claim a cow as damages. Some polygynists are said to circumvent the taboo in this way:

> The husband will go to the father of one of his wives and will take a cow to him and say: 'I have got twins, I petition for your daughter.' Then he can take her into his house and sleep with her, but with his other wives he cannot sleep until she has borne a child. When she does so, then he goes to the fathers of his other wives, taking a bull to each, and says: 'I have had a twin birth but now it is finished, and I am taking your daughters.' If the first wife thus taken bears no child, then he must take a cow to the father of another and try with her.
>
> But several of our informants held that no father in his senses would permit his daughter to be taken by her husband after he had fathered twins, until the mother of twins had herself borne a normal child.

§95 The isolation of the parents of twins from cattle also continues for some time. The father of twins does does not milk or enter a

[1] Mwalimanilo, commenting on the text, said: 'It is as if Kyala were Bada (=Adada).' The reversed implies that not a person, as I is usual with the proper name Kyala.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 F'N17 Ngonde F'N17 Nyakyusa

264 millet, beans and pumpkin with medicines. 'We fear lest the
787 medicines we have drunk will turn round in the belly';[1] and they must be buried in a hut. 'If they are buried outside there will be drought and famine.'

(3) *The overt purpose and symbolism*

895 The overt purpose of the twin ritual is plain to all Nyakyusa.
902 Twin birth is thought to be contagious, causing other twin births, and also to make men and cattle ill. The ritual is to prevent this. Mwambelile, a middle-aged pagan, was explicit on the point:

> People are afraid to go to the house of a man with twins. They think that they will have twins themselves if they do, and we do not like twin births; they are taboo in the country. Or perhaps their legs will swell, or their bellies, or faces, if they go to his house. So we go to a doctor and he comes and sprinkles all the people in the village, even tiny children, and all the cattle. He takes a banana stalk to burn the twin birth (*palalya ipasi*). He burns us because of the twin birth. The water is hot and medicated. He sprinkles us all with it and when we have all been treated we say we have been burnt because of the twin birth.

● 753 When a man has begotten twins we are in awe of this Kyala (*ukukiida Kyala ejo*). . . . If people drink out of the same vessel as the parents of twins, or if the father of twins sleeps with his other wives, this makes the disease increase, the disease of swelling legs and stomach; men catch it, the wives catch it, the children and fathers of the wives catch it. There is also a twin ceremony for cattle; if a cow drops twin calves we fear the same things. You, your wife and children drink medicines, and the cows are all sprinkled with medicine—but not your other relatives, or neighbours.

Mwakibela himself said:

> If I did not wash and went to eat with my relatives, my legs would swell, I should pant and gasp. Swelling of the legs is due to our shades (*imisoka gyetu*) or perhaps Kyala beneath is angry (*Kyala pasi akukiida*).

895 References to Kyala as the cause of twins are frequent:

> Kaswiga: The shades are in twin birth, and Kyala is there—it is he who gives two children. We drive them away. Kyala and the shades are together. When we bury the *ilikolago* in the banana grove I say: 'Kyala, leave my bellows (which means my wife) for me, you shades leave it for me.' If the shades are angry perhaps my penis is broken in copulation.
>
> Mwaikambo: I have not heard people speak of the shades in twin

[1] cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, p. 34.

2: Wilson E-9 (1934-1938)1937 F7617 Ngumbo F7617
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845 and the doctor stands outside at the door. The doctor asks: 'Is it suc-
830 ceeded?' [i.e. can you have intercourse with her?]' and the man says: 'No, it is not successful.' Then all we *abapenge* (priests, officiants), the fathers of the girl who are there, and the fathers of the man, pray, in words only [i.e. without blowing out water], saying: 'Father, support us, Grandfather, support us, Kyala, support us, let not the ritual go on for ever.' And then the man is able to eject, and he tells the doctor: 'It's all right now.'

845 The disease comes from the twin birth (*ifipasi*) when a couple have
• 753 had twins (*bapasile*). If the relatives speak with them or tread in their footsteps when they [the relatives] are empty (*bowe*), not having drunk medicine, then their legs will swell up and they will have diarrhoea. No, they do not say that the private parts will swell, only the legs. The refusal of the seed to come is due to the shades (*mizimu*). If a man has angered his father or mother who are alive, or if they are dead and he give nothing to his sister, then those below, *balanga*, are angry. *Mizimu* catches hold of them and then when he begets twins he will have trouble at the ritual.

845 The semen refuses to come also if the girl has angered her parents,
833 or if her husband has angered them. It's *mizimu*. This copulation is an essential part of the ritual. If the parents of twins do not do this and you meet them afterwards, your legs will swell and dysentery will set in. The fearful ones [the parents of twins] have a fire and create sickness in us. We say: 'Kyala has loved [*ate*] you, he has created you so that you bear twin children. Now we speak with you.'

845 Yes, the old people said: 'Kyala and those below.' They said those below beg Kyala to give them two children. This was said of old, before the Europeans came. One who has himself had twins will not fear his relative who has twins for he says: 'I also am heavy (*nili nzito*), I am a fearful one, a parent of twins myself.' No one fears the twins themselves, but their parents are feared.

The child that follows twins (*ndili*), does not anoint himself at any later twin ritual. It is said that he finished before because he followed twins.

When the parents of twins leave the hut they run with a lighted piece of charcoal,[1] followed by all the friends and relatives; the friends and relatives call out: 'You hit us with fire [i.e. you give us the disease].' They reply: 'We are pure (*tuli bela*) [i.e. we have no disease, it is finished]. Kyala has prayed for us.'

845 And at the death of a parent of twins the relatives fear to touch the
764 corpse until the twin doctor comes and puts a medicine in the hand of the corpse and sprinkles hot medicine on the legs of the relatives—then

[1] This was not seen or mentioned in the Selya ritual.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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they take hold of the corpse. But they wait for the doctor; if they do not do so the same disease will come—a swelling of legs and diarrhœa. An ordinary corpse is not feared in this way.

Yes, a man fears to take his other wives. He says: 'If I just go to them I shall give them the disease of the twins that I begot with this wife.' The wife he takes without precaution will swell in the legs and stomach, and pass blood with her stools. He first tries to have a child with the wife who bore twins, waiting till the twins are walking about. He lies with the mother of the twins but withdraws, and then, when the children are grown, he impregnates her. He does not go to the other wives. And if he asks for another wife before trying to impregnate the mother of the twins her father will refuse. If he takes her without asking, her father will make him pay a cow. He can only ask for another wife if the mother of the twins does not conceive. For one month[1] the husband refrains altogether from intercourse, then after the ritual he goes to his wife (the mother of the twins) but does not impregnate her. . . . A man is supposed to tell the twin doctor before he begets another child with his wife. He must do it openly, and not in secret. It is taboo to do it secretly. Nothing happens, but the doctor is angry, saying: 'Why did you not tell me, the doctor, the owner of the body?'

Themes already familiar from the death and puberty–marriage rituals recur again here. The parents of twins are isolated and cleansed like mourners and nubile girls. Contact with them is held to be dangerous because 'those below'—in this case Kyala and Mbasi rather than the shades—have brooded over them, and must be driven off before normal procreation can be resumed. After their isolation the *ilibalaga*—the symbol of their ritual union—must be offered to the shades of both lineages, that of the man and that of the woman. There is also the eating of balls of porridge, the symbol, in the other rituals, of the actions of a madman, but the fear of madness was not adduced by our informants as the purpose of the twin ritual; rather it is the formidable potency which produces two children instead of one, that is the danger—'the parents of twins have a fire'—and men protect themselves against it by burning themselves with hot medicines. They 'burn the twin birth'.

[1] Presumably longer when the seclusion and ritual lasted longer.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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CHAPTER VII

RITUALS OF MISFORTUNE

845 An abnormal birth is the most dangerous misfortune that can befall a family in Nyakyusa society, and the ritual to ward off its expected results is the most elaborate, but there are lesser misfortunes also, which may be averted by simpler rituals.

753 (*a*) *Cleansing after spearing*

682 When one man has speared another and killed him, even though the action was legitimate (as slaying an enemy in battle, or a cattle thief or an adulterer caught *in flagrante delicto*), the slayer and his relatives dare not eat together with the relatives of the slain, or enter their houses, lest they themselves, and the kinsmen of the slain also, fall ill, coughing, spitting blood, and wasting away. This sickness is known as *ulukwego*, 'the disease of spearing'.[1] Both parties are thought to suffer primarily from contact with each other and both protect themselves by drinking medicines, but they drink separately, each engaging a doctor to treat them. We were told:

[763] If one man kills another it does not finish. He begets children and they die; an autopsy is performed and reveals fighting with spears (*isengene*)[2] The disease may not injure the slayer or his children, but the relatives with whom he eats and drinks, and so also on the other side; it may not hurt the children of the dead man, but those relatives with whom his children eat and drink.

We all fell ill, especially the brothers of the slain. The murderer always remembered to drink the medicine because he knew that he had killed someone, but when your brother was slain perhaps you forgot to drink the medicine. Then, afterwards, if you drank beer with someone, not knowing that it was he who had killed your brother, you fell ill.

783 The manner of treatment is as follows:

If I have killed someone they take me to a waterfall and make m

[1] *Inguego*: a spear. [2] *Ukusegana*: to fight together with spears.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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vomit by tickling the back of my throat with a hen's feather, while I am standing under the fall with the water coming down on my head. The blood of him you have killed is in the waterfall. May it not come! May it all go out of the body! You vomit because it is there in the body. May it go out! Then a medicine is cooked and the legs of the slayer and his relatives are scalded with it. It is the medicine of twins: the twin medicine and the spearing medicine are one because they are a rejection of the blood. When people's legs have been splashed then we all shave; that is to drive away him whom we have killed.

But even after such treatment the kin of the slayer and the slain fear to eat together. 'We remain enemies. If we eat with them it makes us thin.'

Those who drink protective medicines are the agnatic kin of the slayer and the slain, their mothers' kin (*abipwa*) and their wives, but not their affines. 'Those who must be treated are wives, and blood relatives but not affines. Affines are of different blood, but wives are of your flesh.'

The spearing ritual is not a joint ritual in which a large group of kin participate; married men, even brothers, make their own arrangements for taking protective medicine.

We do not meet together with all our relatives, the descendants of one man, no, it is not like the twin ritual. We drink it each man with his wives and children in his house. If I have a married brother he also goes to a doctor to ask for medicines for himself. He seeks his own doctor, not the one to whom I went. We drink separately, we do not meet together when we drink.

Only if a daughter had been given in compensation for a murder (as sometimes happened) and later he who married her took marriage cattle to her father to establish kinship, then, our informants said, the two parties should drink the 'medicine of spearing' (*unkota gwa lukwego*) together.

(*b*) *Rotting the ropes*

A man who has been bound with ropes (*ingoje*), or has committed suicide by hanging,[1] or raided cattle and tethered them, is also

[1] What the incidence of suicide is among the Nyakyusa we do not know. The Rev. Merensky, one of the first Europeans to live in the area, speaks of it being 'not uncommon'. We recorded two cases: one of a man whose wife and children had died; the other a woman forced to leave her lover and marry against her will. X, a Christian whom we knew well, swore to his pagan elder brother that he would commit suicide if his brother insisted on the pagan practice of performing an autopsy on the body of their dead sister.

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753 681 believed to be a danger to his kin and descendants, but in a manner somewhat different from the one who has killed another. The sickness is thought to come from the ropes and is called *ingoje* after them.

Mwaikambo explained:

[783] If one member of a family commits suicide by hanging then his surviving relatives, if they do not drink a medicine, will die of the 'ropes', always. If a man hangs himself all his relatives fear; if a woman only her children.

Kasitile's wife, Kiluleli, had borne ten children, but all save one had died. He said:

It is because of the ropes of her father. They bound him at Tukuyu; he died in gaol; it is those ropes which are killing my children. I said to her father [i.e. the heir]: 'Let us go to divine,' but he has not yet agreed to do so.

The death of Mukwabila, a junior kinsman of the Chief Mwaipopo, whose funeral we attended, was attributed to the ropes used to tether cattle raided by his grandfather. Kasitile, himself a distant agnatic kinsman, explained this case also:

One of the fathers of Mukwabila was killed by the hill people. They [317] seized him on the road. So in revenge Mwamusiku, the father of Mukwabila, took twenty cows belonging to the hill people as they passed north, coming from the salt lick. This was long ago. Then Mukwabila's father omitted to kill a cow for those who had helped him to secure the cows. So they were angry and brought *ingoje*—the disease of ropes—upon him. After seizing the cattle he moved to Mwambebule's country in the hills and he was quite well, but then he came back to live here, first sending two cows to the Chief Mwaipopo, but killing none for the people, who were angry and said: 'Why does he not kill for us? What sort of chief is he?' He got weak and fell ill and died. They [763] did not perform an autopsy, saying it was forbidden to do it on a chief, and his son died also and was not examined, but now when the younger son died, Mwaipopo said: 'Let us examine him so that we may know.' And it is that old *ingoje*. . . .

The sickness of ropes (*ingoje*) is of three sorts coming from: (1) the suicide (by hanging) of a relative long ago; (2) the binding of a man by other people, as distinct from a man binding himself; and (3) the shocked astonishment of men and their breath. In dreams they put the [828] sickness of ropes into his stomach, they say: 'May the sickness of ropes come into his stomach.' The sickness of ropes lies in wait for an heir. A man dies and the sickness comes on his heir, others are all right; so it

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goes on. Mwamusiku was never bound, but we say it was that sickness of the ropes of the cattle that he seized from the hill people. Perhaps the people of that country were shocked, and the sickness is due to their breath, to witchcraft. Perhaps the owners of the cattle took the ropes they had used for tying up the cattle which were stolen, to a doctor to be cooked with medicine. We have not discovered the details yet, we have not yet been to divine; the divination will tell us, however. But the medicine for rotting the ropes (*imbosyo*) is the same for all these illnesses from ropes, so we cook it immediately, before going to divine. We divine when we clear away the litter. The cooking of medicine at the grave now is to rot him who has died that the sickness of ropes (*ingoje*) may not come on us. Yes, only the heir fears to die, but we others fear lest we fall ill, coughing. The sickness of ropes does not kill us, but makes us ill and thin. Yes, I drank and ate the medicine myself. After the divination we drink another medicine, in beer, not the *itemelo* beer. They brew another lot just for the medicine.

We saw the drinking of medicine 'to rot the ropes' at Mukwabila's funeral. He was buried at Kasitile's homestead and Kasitile was organizing the proceedings. The doctor dug a hole at the foot of the grave and put into it a length of green wood which projected a foot or so above the level of the ground. On this was balanced a pot, and a fire was lighted beneath it. In the pot she boiled certain leaves and roots. She took a large drinking calabash, put in some ash from a fire-brand, added some of the same species of leaves as had gone into the pot, and stirred up the mixture with water. This mixture was drunk by the relatives present and fifteen or twenty leaf cups were made to send to those who had not come. Medicated porridge was also made and some was eaten by the relatives present.

Then the pot was taken off the fire. We were told: 'We are praying (*tulipakwiputa*). We want to take the pot off the fire.' No words were said, but the medicines were taken out of the pot by the deceased's father's sister (the oldest surviving member of the lineage) to prepare more porridge for those relatives who had not attended, and the officiant poured the water into a hole which she made in the middle of the grave. She covered it again with earth.

While the officiant was preparing the medicine at the grave, Kasitile, who was helping her, said to a half-brother of the deceased:

Pray earnestly with this medicine, be on good terms with others.
HALF-BROTHER: Me? What case was there against me?

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difficult labour is from this, not from adultery. And in a case of difficult labour her husband does pray to his shades.

All were agreed that a woman is in the power of the shades of her father's lineage and if her father is angry with her, or with his son-in-law her husband, his shades afflict her, causing her to be barren or to have miscarriages, or ailing children. Hence a woman who is barren or ill, or whose children are sickly, often returns to her father's homestead so that he may pray for her, and she sleeps there on the night of the ritual, for the shades come by night. More rarely, if she has quarrelled with her father, she goes outside her husband's homestead and, facing towards her father's home, she prays herself on the pathway. But in all the cases we traced in which a woman's ancestors were believed to have made her, or her child, ill, there was a dispute between her father (or his heir) and her husband over marriage-cattle or the bull of puberty; and we were told that her father's shades 'are angry only if marriage-cattle have not been paid, and for no other reason', thus it seems that the control of her father's shades over a married woman is in fact somewhat limited.

The characteristic illness sent by the shades is sores round the mouth, and fever—an illness which is not acute and clears up quickly. These symptoms are immediately interpreted as *imindu*, affliction from the shades. Beer going sour before it is mature is also *imindu*, usually thought to be caused by quarrels between husband and wife. But almost any misfortune, mild or serious, is interpreted as *imindu* if members of the lineage are conscious of quarrels between themselves, or with their spouses or fathers-in-law.

The ritual consists in the reconciliation of the living in the presence of the dead and, if the misfortune is serious, a sacrifice of flesh, fish, or fowl. The junior begs pardon of his senior who acknowledges his anger and expresses forgiveness by taking a mouthful of water from his calabash cup (*ulupindi*) and blowing it out (*ukwiputa*) in his sacred banana grove. For the patient to recover, or the blight on crops or fish-traps to be removed, *the senior kinsman must confess his anger*, and spitting, or blowing out water, is a symbol of confession and forgiveness. Mwaisumo was explicit on the matter: 'If a father is angry with his son or daughter he may say, some day: "I forgive you now" and spit on the ground: all the anger that is in him comes out like spit.' *Ukuswa* means both 'to

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593 789 783 send the son into his father's house. He walks through the whole house and the mothers acclaim him. This is the sign to show everybody that he has entered his father's house. The women call the *akalulu*. They are rejoicing because he has entered.

There are, however, some who do not return to their fathers. They remain strangers [*abandu* as opposed to *abakamu*] until their death. There is a young man at my home who took his father's wife. Where he fled to no one knows because he is still in hiding. His father separated from him altogether.

A son must always bring something and the father must collect his friends. If they just agree with one another and people do not eat anything, then the son will not be settled in well. He will be ill. They say that the illness comes from the shades. If the father is angry he mutters (*ikwibunesya*) and they hear. At first the people are not angry, but later on, when they have heard from the father about the matter, they also are angry. It is as if they help the father to mutter. Their shades are not there, only those of the father's lineage, but his shades have regard to the people. If the people do not eat anything and are not present, they are not satisfied even though the father is satisfied. The father prays to his shades alone in the evening with water in his mouth, and they pour out beer on the hearth-bricks.

● [753]

764 556 783 KASITILE: If a rich commoner has died and the heir buries him with only one cow, the shades and people are angry with the heir, breath falls on his body; perhaps he falls ill, or perhaps his child falls ill. But they do not meet; people, the witches, are angry and the shades are angry; the shades because they have buried him with only one cow, people because they have not eaten meat, but the shades and people are independent of each other. The oracle says: 'The shades are angry,' it does not speak of people. It knows that people also are angry, but it speaks only of the shades. And when he makes amends he prays in the evening; the next day he calls people and kills a cow and he throws the *ija mmapa* meat in the banana grove and says: 'Here it is, Father,' and people say: 'Indeed, he did wrong, his father was angry.' But they do not confess, saying: 'We were angry.' No, they say: 'The shades were angry.'

754 783 Another type of case is that in which 'the breath of men' is believed to have fallen on an infant because of its mother's disrespectful behaviour towards her husband's parents or husband's father's sister. When a child is thin and ailing with *ingoto*, the cure is for the mother to confess to the doctor who comes to treat the child all the rude things she has said, and provide beer (exceptionally a bull) to offer to her injured parents-in-law. They drink the beer with their neighbours and wish her well. Ambilikile's wife

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775 and appearance—the mind of a child is tenacious. If one comes whom
828 I never knew, I note his appearance in the dream and next day I tell my friends and relatives about it. Then perhaps an old woman, my grandmother, will say: 'That is how So-and-so used to look.' Perhaps I dream of someone wearing brass body-rings, with a plume nodding on his head. Then the older ones know him and tell me it is So-and-so. In the old days, in the days of our mothers, if we dreamed of eating food like this my relatives would say: 'They have come to fetch him; he will get disease and die soon; he has eaten the food of the shades.'
775 But in European times now it is different. . . . Our mothers fear such
828 dreams; there is a medicine to put on the walls. If I always dream like
177 this they bring it and say: 'It's forbidden to dream of the shades.'

QUESTION: And now?

KITITU: Now if dreams come true we say that the man who had dreamed is a prophet.

828 QUESTION: Are all dreams pregnant with trouble?

KITITU: Yes, dreams usually mean trouble. Suppose I love a girl and want to marry her, and then I dream of marriage, of having the cattle and going and being accepted by her fathers who are all present [in the dream], then I rejoice and I hope.[1] Then I begin to think of going to earn the cattle, and I go to work and come back with three or four cattle and go to hand over the marriage-cattle. All ends happily, but it might not. Perhaps they will accept me, perhaps not.

At work I dream that a sister has died, and I find it is true, then I think other dreams will be true. . . . I fear that perhaps my death is near. I go to a doctor and say I want a medicine, he gives me some to put under my head and sleep on. He grinds a medicine and tell me to sprinkle it in the room.

775 It is generally agreed that dreams of the dead are not welcomed:
828 If I speak of the recently dead others will say: 'Don't speak of them, they are dead.' Then I take a coal from the fire and say: 'Do not come in dreams.' If the shade comes it always means trouble.

And the only occasions of prayer to the shades are when men are in trouble and anticipate misfortune.

We never pray except when there is trouble. No, we never pray to give thanks. Why should we? There is nothing to grumble at!

673 (*c*) *Belief and behaviour*

●753 In the Nyakyusa view there is a direct and immediate link be-
777 tween misfortune and wrong-doing. When illness befalls a man,

[1] Kititu's father delayed long in providing him with marriage-cattle. The following year he eloped with a girl.

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or his crops fail, or his cattle die, he reflects on any quarrels he may have had with kinsmen or affines or neighbours, and on any rituals he should have performed and has omitted wholly or in part. He may be quite clear in his own mind that the misfortune is due to some particular wrong-doing (*inongwa*)—perhaps a quarrel with a brother, or neglect to kill for his new neighbours on his inheritance from his father—and proceed directly to patch up the quarrel and perform the neglected ritual. More often he thinks of several possible causes and lays them before the oracle, relying upon it to select between them. How several possible causes of misfortune occurred to the chief sufferers, their kinsmen and neighbours, is shown in the cases of Enesi, Katasya, Mwambuputa and Mpoma quoted at the end of the book (pp. 258 ff.).

No linguistic distinction is made between an offence punished by the courts and one thought to be punished by the shades; both are wrong-doings (*inongwa*), and there is no sharp distinction between an offence against a living kinsman and an offence against a dead one. In short, there is no clear conception of 'sin' as opposed to 'tort' or 'crime'.

There are two themes constantly recurring in Nyakyusa theology: firstly, men must observe the traditional rituals (both positive and negative) or they will go mad; and secondly, the anger of senior relatives and neighbours will injure unless it is confessed and goodwill expressed.

The first conception is a magical one:[1] what is required is the performance or avoidance of particular acts in a particular form on particular occasions; the second is sacramental, it is 'anger in the heart' that is dangerous, and no ritual is held to be efficacious without a change of heart.

Often the two conceptions are not consciously related to one another: again and again one is told: 'The rituals must be performed or men will go mad,' and there is no reference to the state of mind of the performers; but on certain occasions they overlap explicitly, as when Kasitile adjured his kinsmen to confess all while they were performing the ritual to 'rot the ropes'; and always there is a symbolic connection, for the rituals themselves express the value of amity between kinsmen, of respect for seniors and obligation towards juniors.

The neglect of the marriage ritual is itself an expression of disrespect for parents or parents-in-law, and a breach of the sex code,

[1] In the sense defined by G. & M. Wilson, *The Analysis of Social Change*, pp. 89-95.

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went to catch the junior brother who was there, but from that time he has been ill. 754

QUESTION: Did Mwamukinga (the sorcerer) come to the funeral and did they give him meat? 754 764

MWANYOSO: Yes, he came.

QUESTION: Is he not ashamed? Do people agree that they have worked sorcery against someone?

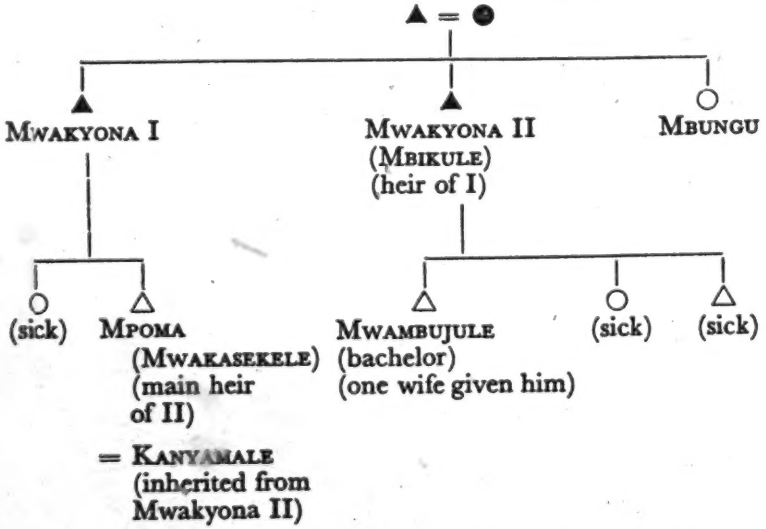
MWANYOSO: They deny it.

QUESTION: Did they give him meat?

MWANYOSO: Yes, they gave it to him.

(b) Sickness in the lineage of Mwakyona

The following case also illustrates how several possible causes of misfortune were considered—sorcery between kinsmen who were quarrelling over inheritance, the anger of the shades, and the jealousy of neighbours were mentioned. It shows, further, how expression of goodwill by those thought to be injuring a man is necessary for his recovery. The doctor treating the patient made the kinsmen confess their anger and gave them a medicine guaranteed to kill anyone working sorcery. 753



MWAIKAMBO: When Mwakyona died, his younger brother, Mwakyona the younger, whom they call Mbikule, inherited. But Mbikule also died, so they sought Mwakionde (the doctor and brother of the chief) and they asked him: 'To whom shall we give the inheritance?' The village elders, their fathers—those of the house—and their father's sisters, were those who saw to the matter of the inheritance. Then 428

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MPOMA: 'I am ashamed, and also I am very angry, because people say it is I who am working sorcery against them, although when they were ill I carried them to my house.'[1]

Mpoma turned back on the road when they sent medicine for the sick man (i.e. he did not go to the sick man).

A WOMAN: 'Why do they work sorcery against one another when they are both left?'

ANOTHER WOMAN: 'The wives of Mbikule say Mpoma says: "Let me be alone, let me kill all of them and get everything for myself by cunning." '

MWAMBUJULE: 'Since I carried him to my place I said the illness would not be serious. He also sent a message to *your* place, Mpoma, saying that he was ill, and asking for some milk, but you did not send any.'

MPOMA: 'No one told me.'

THE WOMAN: 'The widows fight with Mpoma. They say: "You have eaten a medicine to work sorcery against your fellows." '

KANYAMALE: 'Also they speak of his wrongdoing, in not approaching the sick man.'

ANOTHER WOMAN: 'Yes, and also you are angry.'

MPOMA: 'See, when they said the present patient was still ill, I prayed, I said aloud: "What am I doing? Get away, what am I doing?" and I sent a medicine and he recovered.'

A WOMAN: 'We consulted an oracle, it said: "It is Mwakyona who is angry," but I said: "What is he angry about?" The oracle said: "He is angry on account of cattle." He says: "Why does he fear me when he has taken cattle?" So we said: "Mwakyona is angry because he has taken cattle." '

THE MBUNGUS (Mwakyona's sisters): 'We like him (the shade), let him come.'

WOMAN: 'They are jealous of the sick man [i.e. a third cause suggested. The unreasonable jealousy of his neighbours]. He dies like his father. People say: "He eats meat in our houses, he borrows our cloths," and he dies of their unreasonable jealousy (*akabini*)!'

The women and the men said: 'Thank you, Mwakionde, because you have made us think of these things [he had taken the initiative in prayer]. You make us make friends, and make us love one another, and bless one another.'

Mwakionde spoke, saying: 'There are many, many roads on which people travel and there is one road through which illness enters.' They say that if many people are with a sick man then the illness spreads.

They also prayed, confessing their anger in the case of Kanyamale,

[1] 'It is the custom to carry people to the "father", the head of the family, when very sick. This is not supposed to cure them, but it is customary (*loluvibo*). That is where we all are ill, at their father's place.'

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586 parties brought the dispute to the test of intercourse with others. Again, if daughters die one after another, their death is assumed to be due to the [753] disease called *kitasya* in the mother, and she is divorced. A wife who goes out in the morning while her husband is still abed, is doing a very foolish thing, for there is at least the possibility that she is providing ground for divorce. General laziness and uselessness, inability or refusal to carry out the ordinary household duties, if persisted in, lead to divorce.

On the other hand, while ordinary unfaithfulness in the husband gives the wife no ground for an appeal for divorce, no woman will tolerate incest by her husband, but will demand instant release. Beating a wife and starving her will bring down father or brothers in wrath to demand the release of their ward; but beating alone only if merciless and persistent. The right of a husband to beat his wife within reason is not questioned. There are other grounds on which the wife may claim divorce, and also the husband, but in both cases they are such as cannot appear in print.

When a husband's demand for divorce has been granted, all the cattle given to the woman's father are returned, along with the increase which has taken place. British justice, with more fairness, deducts one-fifth or one-quarter of the number of cattle (plus increase) for each child born, the remainder going back to the husband. The children belong to the father, to whom belong also children unborn or too young to leave the mother. When the time comes,

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with the Germans, was struck in the forehead by a bullet, he immediately removed the wound to his leg, where it was harmless. His *amafumu* (subordinate chiefs), however, sternly ordered him to replace it; for he had been toying with Christianity, to the disgust of his subordinates, who, seeing a chance to get rid of him, eagerly seized it, and Mwakalinga passed to his fathers. Mwafongo at Karonga has the same power, and there may be others.

War is attended with so many religious ceremonies that the *tabus* connected with it are best taken under this head. Cowardice in battle is *mwiko*, and the coward gets no share of the spoils. There is a beer feast as part of the preparation for war; but drunkenness before a battle is strictly forbidden. At the approach of war, husbands and wives must not live together, and he who is guilty of illegal intercourse will be killed at the first spear throw, before he has had time to throw his own spear; while a chief who is given to such acts will be defeated, and his men slain.

Prohibitions due to fear of infection are very numerous. One must not pass over the outstretched legs of another, for the offender will be "caught" by any disease from which the offended may be suffering; but a slight nip in the leg of the other by the offender wards off evil consequences. It is *mwiko* to throw a spear at a hyena, for the animal may escape with a wound, and barrenness will result for the offender, unless he goes at once to get counteracting medicines. If your father comes to visit you, you

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784 753 must not give him your own mat to sit on; he sits on a leaf, which is thrown away when he leaves you; otherwise your wives will become thin, and will have no children. It is *mwiko* for an aunt to pat a nephew or niece on the buttocks, lest any disease she has may pass over to them. A man in an epileptic fit must not be roused; he who rouses him will himself become epileptic!

784 The saliva is sacred, and is often used in religious ceremonies; but to spit upon a man is *mwiko*, and may bring itch and scab if payment is not made. The kidneys of an animal may be eaten only if given to you by a chief, or handed on the point of a spear; death of your children is the penalty of neglect of this precaution. Disease clings to the drug that is used to cure it; what is left must be thrown away where no one passes, lest a chance passer-by touching it with his foot be smitten by the disease. For possibly similar reasons, the family of a murdered man must not have friendly relations with the family of the murderer until the necessary ceremonies have been attended to: the spear that killed their friend may kill them too; that is to say, they may be smitten with a disease which reasonable men will trace to their folly in being friendly with hostile persons. The leaves upon which a man sat while his case was being tried have mysterious powers in them; a sorcerer may make deadly medicine out of them: therefore it is *mwiko* not to throw them carefully away.

The blood of a lion killed in the hunt must not be

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262 To-day there are many, even among the heathen, who say grace before food; only the older men now follow the ancient custom of laying aside a small portion of every meal for the spirits. But there are many superstitions nevertheless among young and old. There is a family at Itete which eats neither flesh nor fish, nor ground nuts, any of which cause violent vomiting. Others will eat fish but not flesh, and *vice versa*. Eland and bushbuck bring on leprosy in some families; goat brings ringworm; rhinoceros gives people a white skin; and hippo is very dangerous in the neighbourhood of lepers; for lepers are buried in ant-hills, but they soon remove and betake themselves to the water, and enter the body of a hippo; so, if you eat hippo, you may be eating leper! Nyakyusa women will not eat a fowl, for fowls in the night cry out the names of ancestors! But a cock which gives a faint cry in the early morning is quite safe. There are many who have abandoned all these beliefs, but the vast majority of the people still cling to them.

262 753

273 *Drinking.*—Beer is drink for men and gods; or if not for gods, it is a drink urgently demanded by the spirits. With few exceptions, it is offered at all religious ceremonies, but there is no special way of making the beer for the offering; it differs from ordinary beer only in that the cereal (*malesi*) from which it is made is contributed by all the people, while that used at an ordinary feast is made from *malesi* provided by the entertainer. Even at these feasts, however, a little is spilled on the ground

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bananas, were placed at the door of Mwakindingo his prophet, and if in the morning the quantity was found to be less, it was clear to all that *Mbasi* had come to receive the offerings.

But the trick worked too often. As the fear of *Mbasi* diminished, men began to take advantage of their still credulous neighbours, and to demand in the name of the fading divinity cattle, beer, food supplies, to be sent to the places indicated by the impersonator of the God. This became so common that the Germans, who then ruled the country, interfered and put it down.

Very long ago there lived near Karonga a man called Firaguli, who after his death became a godlet, and lived on the mountain which now goes by his name. There was also a great man called Kambwe, who entered the ranks of the gods or godlets at his death, and lived in the pool a few miles from Karonga, to which in like manner he has given his name. To both of these divinities the people prayed in long-past times; and both, though able to see to the general welfare of the people, were not strong enough to punish them when evil was prevalent. When punishment was necessary, they called in the help of Mwanjebe, a minor deity of the neighbouring Henga people. Firaguli went south on a favouring breeze to invite his more powerful neighbour to come to his help; and Mwanjebe, who lived in a pool at the foot of a waterfall near the Overtoun Institution, came up on a floating island. Then smallpox broke out among the people, and if a visit to Kambwe showed

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that the pool was bubbling, it was evident that Mwanjebe was there, and must be got rid of as soon as possible. Prayers and promises of repentance were offered, and if that did not satisfy the god, more drastic measures were taken. A great stone was heated and tumbled into the pool, around which gathered a great multitude of people, stabbing fiercely at the water with spears and reeds, to drive off the unwelcome deity. The cessation of the bubbling showed that he had gone, and the fact was still further proved when the smallpox ceased. All three godlets are now mere memories, and, except as memories, they have completely vanished, leaving the field clear for the ancestral spirits and the Supreme Being.

There was in the worship, if indeed a determined effort to drive off the deity could be called worship, "no stimulus to the realization of the riches which are given to man in his own nature." The gods presented no problems, for all problems were solved long ago by the fathers; and hence man's relation to them contained nothing upon which the faculties might work and be developed. The religion was stagnant, and the people were stagnant with it.

There was no art; not even rude representations of the gods; no poetry arising out of a feeling of devotion, for devotion there was none. In the case of the godlets I have mentioned, even the qualities which caused them to take rank as gods after death have been forgotten. It may be that the stories of "the brave days of old," to be related in a later chapter, afford us a hint of how the process of deifica-

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distinguished for the drastic action of the people, who, exasperated by the frequent disappearance of children, tumbled an immense heated stone into the pool, and so drove out the spirits, who to this day dwell in a pool in the Sango country, "where the white men go to see them."

Yet another class are the mountain or hill spirits. Offerings are made to them by people climbing steep hill-sides. A stone is picked up, breathed upon, and laid upon a large flat stone, or in the fork of a tree, with the prayer, "May my feet be light." These stones are to be seen to-day in small heaps on many a steep ascent. Sometimes more valuable offerings were made, though these have now ceased. A fowl, a sheep, or a goat, was brought, and left alive to meet whatever fate might be in store for it. These spirits, like those of the water, are pre-human, and hostile to mankind, upon whom they bring many diseases. Belief in them is dying out, and the younger people know little or nothing about them.

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failure of crops, of increase of livestock, of children, by too little or too much rain, or by ill-success in hunting or fishing; and, very emphatically, by a sudden death.

The prayer and ceremony at the presentation of a new-born child have already been given. More pathetic is the prayer offered when a child is ill. Standing at the sacred banana grove, the family representative prays:

> ". . . and now this little one whom I hold in my hands, be gracious to him. He [she] has come into a world of sickness, of cold, of all the troubles that you yourselves were familiar with. Let him lie in peace. Let none in the spirit-land be angry with him. To-morrow he will be full-grown, and he will bring you beer, flesh, flour. Pray to God for him. O God, who art Lord of all, let thy breath be cool upon him (liti, Let thy spittle be cool upon him)."

Then, spitting on the child's breast and back, he says:

> "And thou child, may there be life in thee. God be gracious unto thee. Live in peace and be not wearied."

Not all diseases are due to the anger of the spirits; a natural illness is one that yields to treatment. It is the act of God, and when the right medicine has been used, cure will follow, for God does not need to be entreated as the spirits do. Yet the spirits carry their petitions to God, as if He did need to be entreated,

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761 that the sick man should die, and there is nothing more that can be done. Numerous instances have been cited to me of recovery of sick persons when all had been correctly performed; and scepticism on the subject was received with almost incredulous amazement. And there is no reason to doubt that in many cases recovery did follow; for the conviction in the mind of the patient that the wrath of the offended spirit had been averted, would, according to modern ideas of psychology, have a healing effect also upon his body.

•753 782 Smallpox is the disease most dreaded by the people, and its approach was accompanied with most elaborate ceremonies. The subject is dealt with again under "Witchcraft" and "Medicine." It might come either through the action of the spirits or through [787] witchcraft. In either case its approach is foreseen by the *abakunguluka* (prophets) in dreams, and the chief and his subordinates go to the grave of the ancestors, and there, by night, a black ram is killed. The lungs and liver are roasted, and laid in little heaps on the grave, each ancestor being named as his portion is laid down, and prayer is offered:

"Ye fathers, look upon us in mercy. Drive away from us this plague, lest our children die, and none be left in the land. Send it to the Basango or the Basafwa, but save us. Pray to God for us. Hear, O God, the words of those we have named. And go to the west, O God, or to the Basango."

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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753 782

The flesh is now eaten roasted, and the stomach of the animal, filled with medicines not known to me, is given to an old man, and the skin placed on his back; with these he goes, by night, through the whole district covered by the prayer. If the journey is not finished in one night, he lies in a village until it is dark again, care being taken that he is seen by none, and completes his circuit. On his return, the chief calls all the people together, and declares that if the disease is the work of witchcraft, the evil ones will certainly be discovered and punished; but if it is the work of the spirits, "we have prayed to them to send it far hence to the Basango." Family ceremonies, of a similar nature, follow, each head of a family offering a little beer to his ancestors. At Karonga this latter ceremony has almost entirely been abandoned. There, however, the prophet to whom the coming of smallpox has been revealed goes about the villages, crying, "*ilibofu, ilibofu, ilibofu*" (smell, of dead bodies), a dreadful cry, which brings the people in a mass to the chief to demand the performance of the ceremonies. Similar prayers are offered when mumps, dysentery, or widespread eye disease visits the community.

782

When a man is about to set out on a journey, his father gives him his blessing, and prays to the spirits for him, adding:

> "May lion and leopard and hyena, crocodile and snake and falling tree, be far from you, and may you return in peace."

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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791 both still living near the lake shore; but the Germans
781 knew nothing of the prophecy. The effect of it, however, was that no local carriers could be recruited, and most of the carriers employed were found among the Basango to the north. Next, it was asserted that the Germans would evacuate Neu Langenburg without fighting, which is what actually happened; and, finally, about the same time, it was declared that the "first-comers" would become lords of the country. These first-comers were Mr. Moir of Glasgow and his companions, who hunted elephant north of the Songwe River in the early eighties. Dr. Laws of Livingstonia visited the north end of the lake much earlier, but that visit did not make the same impression as the more prolonged stay of Mr. Moir and his fellow-hunters.

791 Smallpox is the most dreaded scourge in the district. It is believed to come from the south, pass
●753 through the land, and finally to disappear among the
754 Basango to the north, to whom the Konde consigned, with much gusto, all the evils that they were threatened or afflicted with. Its coming was foretold by the prophets, who declared that it was an act of God in punishment of wickedness. But smallpox was sometimes brought by the sorcerers. These enemies of society were caught in the act—in dreams—by the prophets, who also, in dreams, went out to meet and repel them. If the evil-doers were caught and beaten, their bodies next day would betray them, for the dream-fight is a stern reality, and the body bears the marks of battle. If the prophets succeeded in

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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driving out all the sorcerers, no one would die of smallpox, but one remaining sorcerer could work unlimited mischief so long as he remained undiscovered.

In a community which practises "subsistence agriculture," it is important to know beforehand when the rains will be late, and it is the duty of the prophets to let the chief know, and through him the people, when this will happen. In such a contingency, the chief issues instructions, varying in minuteness, regulating the kinds of food which are to be used, and warning against greed. Punishment used to follow disregard of the prohibition, but the chiefs, although they still issue orders as before, do not now venture to punish offenders, or at any rate they punish none who would be likely to report them to the Administration.

Famine, however, was not always the result of drought. It was often, in the past, the result of war. When a powerful enemy approached, the people left the villages and took refuge in the bush, sometimes for long periods, leaving all that they could not carry to fall into the hands of the invader. The last occasion on which such a famine was foretold was when the Angoni passed through the land seeking a habitation. The people fled before them, and a famine resulted which is still traditionally remembered. With such a powerful enemy approaching, the prophets had an easy task in foreseeing famine.

The death of chiefs is also foretold. The prophets see in dreams the house of a chief being built in the

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snake. It emerges from the pool, with a *hu hu* sound, and the runner flies for his life towards the hut, pursued by the snake. Attracted by the sprinkled food, it climbs all over the hut, and is cut to pieces on the knives. After a little, and usually at night, the doctor in charge goes out to reconnoitre, and, finding the dead body, sends to tell all the surrounding chiefs and big doctors; who come, protected by a powerful prophylactic, for even the dead *inyifwira* can kill the unprotected. Each chief gets a portion of the flesh, a large share going to Chungu, who in turn distributes it to his leading subordinates and doctors. The blood is collected and sold, a small portion for a cow, to smaller men, who have no natural right to it.

The dread in which this medicine (*ifingira* it is now called) is held by the common people, is extraordinary. At Karonga in 1923 a man was accused of attempting to poison another. On his person was found a small packet done up in bark-cloth, which no native in the court would touch; and when the magistrate took it into his hands and proceeded to open it, the court was cleared in an instant. Whether it was the medicine made from the *inyifwira* snake, I do not know; but it undoubtedly belonged to that class of medicines.

Illnesses may be due to natural causes, which the native calls God. They yield to treatment without any ceremony. The prayer already quoted indicates the Konde attitude to such diseases. Secondly, illness may be due to witchcraft, and then there is no hope of cure until the sorcerer has been outwitted by

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the use of both drugs and ceremonies. Next, the action of the spirits brings on diseases, and until the cause of their anger has been dealt with, no doctor will undertake to cure the patient. Wounds or injuries in battle, by falling trees, by attack of animals, or by any other means, may be due to any of the above causes.

The doctor may be a man or a woman. The fee varies from about a farthing to a sixty shilling cow, and the manner of payment varies also. In some cases payment precedes treatment; in others, it follows; and in still others the degree of cure effected decides the amount to be paid.

In what follows, no attempt is made at scientific classification; rather a rough grouping of symptoms guides the sequence of items. Medicines are usually administered in beer or in milk, hot or cold, according to the disease which is being treated. And the place where the decoction is drunk is very important; in snake bite, for instance, it is fatal for the patient to go inside the house before the medicine has been taken which it is hoped will save his life. A native Christian was, in 1913, suspended from ordinances for drinking medicine while seated on a banana stem at a place where two paths met.

Mental troubles of various kinds are treated, and not, I am assured, without success in some cases. *Maya* is grief, due to any cause. It is treated by giving an infusion of a plant called *nsabe*, not unlike parsley in appearance. The result is great cheerfulness in the patient, due, no doubt, to exhilarating qualities in

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

were dealt with by the local rulers or by the family-heads, not by the central authorities. It was only occasionally that general fears or misfortunes turned all men's thoughts together to Mbande.

Now the great-commoners of every chief were believed to have independent access to his ancestral spirits and this gave them a spiritual hold over him. If they compared him too unfavourably with his predecessors then, it was believed, those predecessors might hear and afflict him in various ways. And so it was also with the nobles of Ngonde and the reigning Kyungu. But as this belief was intimately linked with the belief in witchcraft it will be more conveniently analysed in that context.[1]

(b) *THE MAGICAL ELEMENT.*

Magic (the belief that certain particular objects, events, words or actions, involving particular people in particular situations, possessed in themselves an extraordinary power) was an essential ingredient of the old pagan religion of Ngonde. While the greatest magical object in the country was, traditionally, the body of the Kyungu. And the fact that the central political authority of Ngonde was so largely vested in the nobles of Ngonde was due above all to their responsibility for controlling this magical object in the public interest.

If the Kyungu cut himself, and more particularly if his blood fell to the ground, then it was the duty of the nobles of Ngonde to kill him, lest the whole land be afflicted with disease; and if he was ill likewise. "They considered that if his blood fell to the ground that was his life falling. And they likened him to a god, considering it taboo for a god to be wounded; they thought that if his blood fell to the ground it would turn into a sickness and all the people would die. And so, when the Kyungu was wounded, they thought it best to put him out of the way and start afresh with a new one. They thought it taboo for him to have even the tiniest wound on his body. And it was equally taboo for him to fall ill; everyone else, it was believed, would fall ill too; it was better to put him out of the way so that the people should keep well."

In consequence of this belief elaborate precautions were taken to maintain the Kyungu's health. Sexual impurity was believed to be magically dangerous to health in many ways and so the Kyungu, above all men, must be guarded from it. It was not considered safe even for his own wives to cook his food, lest one of them touch it during a menstrual period, and so young boys who had not yet reached puberty

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1 *Vide infra* section 3 (c).

8: Wilson E-5 (1934-1936) 1936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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593 they continually give each other cows; between their respective sons also the exchange usually continues, but between their grandsons it lapses. 593 Reciprocity is expected and can be legally enforced, but it is not insisted 686 upon so long as the two men concerned are friends, and its legal enforcement at once breaks the relationship. If two such half-brothers (or their sons) quarrel, one may take legal action for "separation" (*okolekana*) against the other. The cows that have been handed over by both sides since the beginning of the relationship (perhaps twenty or thirty years before) are counted up, and one or the other is ordered to pay over the balance to make the numbers equal. After this the two are "no longer kinsmen," they have no mutual obligations and do not attend each other's funerals.

593 It is usual for a father to create this relationship between his senior 428 son and the eldest of each group of full-brothers, so that by this exchange of cows the family is held together. The linkage of half-brothers, whether by blood or by "milking each others cows," is important in inheritance. If a man with no full-brother dies and leaves no sons, or sons too young to inherit, then the inheritance passes to a linked half-brother; to a half-brother linked by blood if there is one, if there is not then to one linked by exchange of cows.

771 Religion enters continually into family life and helps to maintain wider kinship bonds also. The Nyakyusa religion falls, broadly, into three parts: The Ancestor cult, Witchcraft and Magic. Taken as a whole their religion, as they believe, secures for them many of the most important values of life, health, good crops and success in various enterprises; it provides an intelligible explanation of death and misfortune by tracing them to the ill-will either of the ancestral spirits or of living men acting through witchcraft or magic; in its rituals it resolves fear and replaces it by hope and confidence; while the believed destructive action of the ancestors and of men is generally, though not entirely, linked with morality.[10] The commonest explanation of misfortune is that some wrong done by the victim, or by his close kinsman, has provoked the spirits or his fellow men to anger.

769 As long as a man has alive a father, a father's full-brother, or a senior ●753 brother or half-brother[11] of his own, this senior kinsman deals with the ancestral spirits, not only on his behalf, but also on behalf of his wives and children; and health is the chief value which his prayers are believed to secure for them. In the absence of sickness or misfortune no appeal is

[10] cf. Godfrey Wilson. "An African Morality." *Africa*. Jan. 1936.
[11] Provided the relationship between them has not been legally broken (*vide supra*.).

8:Wilson E-5 (1934-1936)1936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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ever made to the spirits, but when some member of a family or his wife or child falls sick the anger of the spirits is often suspected as a possible cause. There are usually other reasons suspected as well, and so the sickness is taken to a diviner for diagnosis. Various causes are suggested to the diviner and he selects one among them. If the anger of the spirits is selected then this senior kinsman must pray for the one who is sick, if he is to recover. When half-brothers live at a distance from one another, after their father and his brothers have died, then each may pray to the spirits to cure a little sickness in his own family but if the sickness persists then a message must be sent to the senior kinsman. And, as the anger of the spirits is due to wrong doing, the sinner must reform his ways as well.

The wrongs which rouse the spirits to anger are usually breaches of family morality. If a son does not respect his father or insults him, if an heir neglects to feed and provide for the dead man's children, then when sickness falls on him or his own children it will probably be traced to the anger of the spirits at his behaviour.

Space does not allow any full analysis of religion in family life and in the relationships of kinsmen and affines. Not only the ancestor cult but witchcraft and magic are factors in them. A man's neglect of a wife or his cruelty to her may, it is believed, lead to his falling sick through her witchcraft and that of sympathetic neighbours; his relations with his father-in-law are affected by the fear that if he offends him, his father-in-law may, by magical means, kill his children, and so on.

Wider kinship groupings than the family gather at ceremonies and are recognized in the rules against incest. But there are no clans; there is no descent group continuous down the generations with a common name and definite membership. Each individual family has its own penumbra of kinsfolk, the effective kindred of a man and his son, or of two half-brothers are not all the same, while each single person is especially related by respect, affection and mutual obligations to particular kinsmen beyond his own family. Descent, as we have seen, is patrilineal except in the case of illigitimate children. A man asked for his *ekekɔlɔ* always recites first the names of his paternal forbears as far as he can remember. But if he is related through mother or grandmother to a chief he usually volunteers this fact as part of his *ekekɔlɔ*; and questions always elicit some knowledge of his mother's paternal kinsfolk and a statement that "they are my *ekekɔlɔ* too." Descendants of a common grandfather (either paternal or maternal) are to-day forbidden to marry, and no case of infringment has come to my notice; descendants of a common great-grandfather are supposed not to marry but, I am told,

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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'Lwembe listens to him'. 'If Kinga messengers went [to Lubaga] without going through Mwakalukwa's country there would be much hunger. . . . Once Mwemusi and Kyelela [Kinga chiefs] conspired together and sent off men with hoes to Lubaga, without reference to Mwakalukwa. They carried ten hoes. But when they got back disease killed many in the country, and they paid Mwakalukwa and did not do it again.'

It is true that an independent Nyakyusa chief *can* send an offering to Lubaga on his own; it is received by the priests of Lubaga and sacrificed in the grove, and such a sacrifice is held to be in some measure efficient, but drought or sickness in the country as a whole is often attributed to one or other of the participating groups failing to play their part. Moreover, such a failure is thought to be dangerous to the chief or priest who neglects his duties, as we shall see in the case of Kasitile.

The priests of Lubaga ministered to the Lwembe but they had also the right and duty of admonishing him if he did wrong, just as village headmen have the right and duty of admonishing their chief. If the Lwembe broke a taboo 'then Kissoule and the other priests would be very angry and reproach him for bathing and making hunger, and he would pay them a bull in recompense.' Even the 'divine king' was subject to the rule of law. All through the political organization and ritual patterns of the Nyakyusa there is this balance and reciprocity between chiefs and commoners and it is here that the Nyakyusa system differs radically from that described by Professor Frankfort for ancient Egypt.[1] The heroes had brought the gift of chieftainship to the Nyakyusa but it had not ousted another, perhaps older, tradition of democratic leadership; instead, the two were welded in a partnership which, to the Nyakyusa, is so much part of the necessary order of the universe that they speak of commoner priests and headmen as 'wives' of the chiefs. The Kissoule in office is 'the wife' of the Lwembe.

In the grove at Lubaga sacrifices of black cattle and sheep and libations of millet beer were offered by the Nyakyusa, while the Kinga brought hoes, bamboo beer, salt, the sacred drum *ngoma*, and *ifika*, that is, marvels whose nature, Kasitile averred, he did not know himself. The shrine of Lubaga, and the actors and actions connected with it, are miraculous and terrible, terrible even to the actors themselves who tremble when they enter the grove, and

[1] H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods* (1948), pp. 51-6.

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Lwembe, and the grove of the first Lwembe himself, the last being the most sacred. In it stands a miraculous tree from which, the priests aver, sometimes comes sap like water, and sometimes blood. 'If it is watery there will be a plague of ulcers in the country—running sores—if it is blood there will be dysentery. But as soon as the hoes are placed in the grove, or the black bull is killed, then the sick begin to recover.'

Godfrey Wilson attended three celebrations at Lubaga, and we heard of five others which occurred during our period of field-work. The ritual is esoteric, that is to say, only the representative of Lwembe and his priests participate, and the details are not revealed to others, but its occurrence is widely known and discussed among older men.

The celebrations observed were modified by the fact that no one had been installed as Lwembe since the death of Mwakisisya (56) before 1914. The possible candidates whom the priests had wished to instal had refused—'they feared the grove'; the only one who was said to be willing was rejected on account of his character. The priests gave 'European times' as the reason for there being no Lwembe. 'When the country was ours before you Europeans came' the elected candidate was compelled to accept office. On the death of Mwakisisya, the Kinga priests ordered that his senior son Mwanjala I (77) should take his place, and when Mwanjala I died (three years after his father) his full brother Mwanjala II (78) succeeded. He took a leading part in the rituals observed, but was not an anointed Lwembe. The priests explained: 'We fear, thinking that if a chief is seized [and compelled to sit on the stool] he will complain to the Government and we shall be punished.' During the period of German rule they had been threatened with imprisonment if they continued the ritual . . . 'we feared and stole through the country by night'. . . . And there is still much secrecy about its truncated celebration. Since the journey down 'the road of Lwembe' with the drum traditionally involved human sacrifice, and the Lwembe was smothered when ailing, there is an absolute incompatibility between a full celebration of the ritual and European administration.

The influence of the Christian minority is also considerable. The view of most Nyakyusa Christians with whom we discussed communal rituals is that they used to be efficient, but are so no longer, since men have been taught a better way of approaching God. 'God said: "They are mistaken but in their hearts they are

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(82) grove. According to custom, we should kill a bull here at the same time as one is killed at Lubaga. A messenger from there finds us eating. That was the custom when the chiefs were really chiefs. Now we neglect the rituals. Mwakisisya (111) cut a ripe banana stem for us, but now the bananas are rotting in the homesteads without ripening [owing to our failure to sacrifice]. If our fathers did not sleep they sacrificed cattle, but if we do not sleep we merely offer beer.

Then Kasitile recalled the quarrel between the men of Mwaipopo (116) and those of Lubaga.

Why did you insult Mwakisisya (111) saying 'What remains of your power?' When we built the Court House in Mwaipopo's country, Mwakisisya's men came to help, and some advised that a beast should be sent to Lubaga to seek blessing on the Court, but others said: 'What use is Lubaga?' . . . Mwakisisya cut a banana stem for us and said 'Seek another cow oh thou Mwakagile' (59, i.e. identifying Kasitile with the grandfather of the chief Mwaipopo whom he represented).

This, however, was an invention of Kasitile's. He continued: 'I, Kasitile, have seen a sacrifice at the grove of Mwaijonga (82) twice, at that of Mwaipopo (115) once, and at that of Mwakabule (117) once, but at Lubaga Kyala has received us frequently.' To which Mwambuputa replied: 'Yes, Kyala has helped us.'

Under pressure from Kasitile and the other priests of his chiefdom Mwaipopo did eventually provide a cow for sacrifice at the grove of his father Mwaijonga (82) but the description of that ritual is deferred to a later chapter.

A fundamental conception in Nyakyusa religion is that the proper working of the natural order depends upon harmony of the social order; on proper co-operation between the 'divine king' and his 'sons' the chiefs, between priests and chiefs, and between them and the whole community. If the Lwembe or a rain-maker is offended, that causes drought or flood in the area of his influence. When there is heavy rain in Selya it is said, 'There is anger at Lubaga' or 'There is anger at Lwembe's place'. Mwanjala II (78) talking of how angry he had been over an insult remarked, 'Had it been the wet season there would have been a torrent of rain.'

And not only does quarrelling between chiefs and priests bring public misfortune; it reacts upon their own health. How Kasitile linked his ill-health with the quarrel between Mwakisisya (111) of Lubaga and the men of Mwaipopo (116) over the Court, and Mwaipopo's failure to provide cattle for sacrifice has just been

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indicated (*vide supra*, p. 35). And, as we shall see later, he also suspected that his quarrels with the Kinga priests and with the commoner priests of Mwaipopo's chiefdom made him ill.

Chiefs, and even the 'divine king' himself, lived in fear of the legitimate anger of their people, more particularly of their village headmen and priests, believing that such anger would bring them sickness, and this belief gave headmen and priests a very strong hold over their lord. How it worked was illustrated by an incident at Lubaga.

Mwanjala II (78) remarked to Mwakilima (111): 'I sent to summon Mwasesi (a commoner priest) for the ritual tomorrow but he refused saying: "I shall not come." He is angry because he was not called to the ritual at your home, nor was he told formally when the Kinga came, or when Mwaipaja [G.W.] came.' Mwakilima (111) asked: 'Will you pay him?' [i.e. admit your mistake and offer him compensation]. Mwanjala replied that he would, and Mwakilima expressed disgust. One of the Kinga priests who was listening broke into the conversation: 'Ignore him if he refuses to come. If it were us we should leave him and celebrate without him, but you Nyakyusa are all witches, and you fear to ignore a man who refuses to come to a ritual saying that he will bewitch you. You are cowards, you are!'

At this Godfrey Wilson asked if there were no witchcraft in BuKinga. The Kinga priest replied: 'There is some, but if the chief gives orders to celebrate a ritual and someone refuses to come we ignore him, and celebrate without him. You Nyakyusa *pay* a man for doing wrong. A man refuses to come when he should and then you *pay* him! If you are afraid of witchcraft why not finish the ritual and send his portion of meat to him afterwards?'

Another priest objected: 'Then he would say it was too small a piece.'

The commoner priests then could control even the Lwembe (for Mwanjala II acted in the place of the Lwembe though he was not installed), but at the same time the mystical power of the Lwembe was feared both by ordinary chiefs and commoners. Mwaijonga (82), who ruled before the European occupation, insulted and fought Mwakisisya the Lwembe (56), and killed some of his men, because 'Lwembe had spoiled the year', but he sent back the cattle that were seized.

In the old days it did not matter killing the Lwembe's men (in war), but no one dared to take his cattle, they feared lest he would spoil the year and send too much rain, and a plague of ulcers, and cause the cattle to

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643 753 [781] die. . . . People feared very much because the Lwembe had medicines for smearing on his body, which could cause rain, sickness, food, ulcers, anything.

And they feared lest they might get ulcers if they killed one of Lwembe's men 'on the road'—i.e. a traveller. In short, Lwembe's mystical power afforded the first feeble beginnings of a 'king's peace' in a land of warring chiefdoms, where strangers were fair game.

(c) MBANDE

778 Mbande is a hill on the plain of north Nyasaland with a commanding view of the surrounding country and well suited to defence. The west side is precipitous and below the scarp edge there used to be a marsh; to the north the hill is protected by a wide reach of the Lukulu river. It is a sacred place and for many 643 generations was the home of the 'divine king', the Kyungu. Like the Lwembe he was the living representative of a hero, and was selected by a group of hereditary nobles from one of two related lineages, the office alternating (if suitable candidates were available) between the two. They sought a big man,[1] one who had begotten children and whose sons were already married, not a young man for, the nobles said, 'young men always want war, and destroy the country'. He must be a man of wisdom (*gwa mahala*) and generous in feeding his people.

The Kyungu's life was governed by taboos even more rigorous than those surrounding the Lwembe. He must not fall ill, or [784] suffer a wound, or even scratch himself and bleed a little, for his [753] ill health, or his blood falling on the earth would bring sickness to the whole country. 'Men feared when Kyungu's blood fell on the ground, they said, "It is his life".' 'If he had a headache his wives (if they loved him) told him not to mention it, they hid his illness; but if the nobles entered and found him ill they dug the grave and put him in it, saying, "He is the ruler (*ntemi*), it's taboo for him to be ill". Then he thought: "Perhaps it is so" (with a gesture of resignation).'

751 Great precautions were taken to preserve his health. He lived in a separate house with his powerful medicines. His food was 643 prepared by boys below the age of puberty lest a menstruating [841] woman, or a youth who had lain with a woman, should touch it [644] and so bring sickness upon him; and his numerous wives were [753]

[1] *Unyambala mwamu*. It implies both big physically and important.

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immured in the royal enclosure—a great stockade—and jealously guarded, for any infidelity on their part was thought to make their husband ill, and with him the whole country.

When the Kyungu did fall ill he was smothered by the nobles who lived around him at Mbande, and buried in great secrecy, with a score or more of living persons—slaves—in the grave beneath him, and one or two wives and the sons of commoners above. And in the midst of all this slaughter the nobles brought a sheep to look into the grave that the dead Kyungu might be gentle (*mololo*) like the sheep!

The living Kyungu was thought to create food and rain, and his breath and the growing parts of his body—his hair and nails and the constantly replaced mucus of his nose—were believed to be magically connected with the fertility of the Ngonde plain. When he was killed his nostrils were stopped so that he was buried 'with the breath in his body'; while portions of his hair and nails and of his nasal mucus were taken from him beforehand and buried by the nobles of Ngonde in the black mud near the river. This was 'to defend the country against hunger', 'to close up the land, to keep it rich and heavy and fertile as it was when he himself lived in it'.

His death was kept secret—a relatively easy matter since he lived in seclusion—and one of the nobles (*Ngosi*) impersonated him wearing his clothes. After a month or two when the nobles had decided whom to choose as the new Kyungu, the luckless man was summoned to Mbande: 'Your father calls you.' 'Then he came with his companions and entered the house to make obeisance; they seized him and put the sacred cloth on him and set him on the stool "Kisumbi", saying, "Thou Kyungu, thou art he", and he became the Kyungu. Then they struck the drum, Mwenekelwa, and everyone knew that the Kyungu had died and another had been installed.' Men feared greatly to be seized as the Kyungu, just as they feared to be seized as the Lwembe, because the life of a divine king was short. Ngonde historians quote a number of cases of sons of the Kyungu who fled to escape being set on the stool; once they had sat on it they dared not flee lest they die.

Though[1] the early Kyungus had lived on the stony top of Mbande none of them had been buried there, for 'the ground was

[1] The following section is quoted, with additions and amendments, from Godfrey Wilson, *The Constitution of Ngonde*, pp. 29 ff.

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Since the 'coming out' of his sons spelt not only retirement, but a speedy death to a chief, he was not unnaturally reluctant to hasten it and, we were told, chiefs would try to defer it, but were pressed by their village headmen to celebrate, and had eventually to accept their advice. Indeed we heard of one chief whose illness was attributed to the 'breath' of his men, angry because he refused to hold the 'coming out' which was due.

Nowadays the situation is radically altered by the fact that chiefs continue to live long after the 'coming out' of their sons, and the administration treats the old chief as the sole authority, or the old men find good reasons for not holding the celebration at all.

Before the ritual there is much speculation and excitement throughout the chiefdom, and private discussions between the old chief and his village headmen about suitable candidates for office. They look for men of wisdom (*amahala*),[1] skilled in settling disputes, modest (for boastfulness is judged intolerable in a Nyakyusa age-village as it is in an English public school), and given to hospitality. A leader must feed his men and to do so he requires to be relatively wealthy, therefore the poor have little chance of office.

When the old men are agreed among themselves they summon all the young men to the capital. They come dancing and swaggering with all their cattle, and there the old headmen seize, one by one, those they have chosen as village headmen for the next generation, beginning with the senior headman for each heir, then the second senior for each, and so on. Usually eight are chosen, four for each young chief. We get a glimpse of what it means to one individual in the following statement by the second headman of the chief, Koroso (173):

> I made fire at the 1910 'coming out'. I can't tell much because we who were caught were in fear and trembling. I knew beforehand, because my brother was told to come from Ipyana [mission], but he was a Christian and the missionaries refused to allow him to become a village headman—they feared the medicines. He ran away and came here—he wanted to be a headman and the old men wanted him, but then he changed his mind and went off to be a soldier, and so they took me.

Probably word of who have been chosen as village headmen

[1] For a discussion of the content of *amahala*, cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 89-90.

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play one village against another and go to sleep in that section of the country which supports him, but he dare not anger all his headmen. In the same way a village headman dare not anger the main body of his men. In short, public opinion is an effective sanction because those in authority believe that the disapproval of their fellows may bring a fever or paralysis upon them. One of our Christian informants was insistent that, were it not for the belief in the 'breath of men', pagan chiefs and headmen would act tyrannically.

The situations in which a chief or headman fears the breath of men are very varied. We have already referred to the chief who thought his illness was due to his refusal to hold the 'coming out' for his sons when advised to do so.[1] Mwaipopo, before whose court a very bitter land dispute between two of his villages had been brought, refused to give judgement and was careful to sleep in the village that had possession of the land, and therefore less cause for anger.[2] Kasitile, the hereditary priest of the chief's lineage who counted as 'a chief' as opposed to 'a commoner', thought he had angered the village headmen of his generation (who had become priests) by not providing meat for them (*vide infra*, p. 125).

The headmen are responsible for the health of their chief and it is they who go to consult an oracle if he is ill and take him to a doctor. Mwankuga II (151), heir to Mwaipopo's chiefdom, had not begotten a son by any of the wives he inherited from his elder brother who had died. His village headmen[3] went to consult an oracle and were told that it was the wrath (*imindu*) of his father; so they reported the matter to Mwaipopo, who sent a junior kinsman to consult another oracle. The diagnosis was confirmed and Mwaipopo gathered his younger brothers and prayed and told the shades that he had no quarrel with his kinsmen. Then he told the village headmen to take Mwankuga to a doctor for treatment, but this they did not do, so that Mwankuga went to consult a doctor on his own. According to Kasitile it was because the headmen had not taken Mwankuga that the medicine did not work. 'They should take him to the doctor and be present in dreams, to watch over him in dreams.' What the headmen were angry about was not revealed—there was no obvious cause.

[1] *op. cit.*, pp. 134-5. [2] *op. cit.*, pp. 188-90.

[3] Mwankuga I who died had 'come out' before Mwankuga II inherited from him, but Mwaipopo (116) continued to rule as chief and draw a Government salary.

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643 778 622 [754] [789] As we have seen, the chief's fearsome medicine *inyifwila* is thought to be very dangerous, and too much in the tails may cause them 'to fly about throttling men and cattle', but a chief is never accused of working witchcraft; it is inconceivable to the Nyakyusa that he could be. If the tails have got out of hand they are treated by a doctor 'to close them up'; no one suggests that the chief should get rid of them. It is commoners, 'black people', who are witches —cannibals, the eaters of raw flesh—as opposed to chiefs who, since the dawn of history, have killed cattle for meat and cooked their food like civilized men. But the distinction does not extend very far; junior kinsmen of the chief are 'commoners' and may well be accused of practising witchcraft.

[182] There was a delicate balance of power in the Nyakyusa constitution between hereditary chief and commoner headmen and the belief in the power of medicines and of witchcraft was an integral part of it. The chief provided fruitfulness by the power of his own body and his medicines; all men depended upon him for their well-being—food, cattle, children, success in war; but he in his turn depended upon the goodwill of his men led by their village headmen; without it he shivered and fell ill, only to be buried by them 'with the breath still in his body' lest the power of growth disappear with his breathless corpse.

Something of the quality of this mutual dependence and fear is conveyed in Kasitile's account of his own illness quoted in Chapter VIII.

(*e*) THE NECESSITY FOR HARMONY

182 643 622 793 [753] [821] [688] The welfare of the chiefdom is thought to depend upon harmony between the chief and his village headmen and priests, and also between the chief and his kinsmen. Any friction between them may result in public misfortune as well as sickness to the individual at fault. The quarrel of Kasitile, the priest, first with the Kinga priests, and then with the commoner priests of Mwaipopo's chiefdom was believed to affect the crops and the weather, as well as Kasitile's own health (*vide infra*, pp. 124-41), and Mwaipopo's failure to tell Kasitile formally of the death of their kinsman led to rain which spoiled the funeral dance. A quarrel between the lineages of two chiefs which should have sacrificed together was said to have been followed by a very poor millet crop (*vide infra*, pp. 79-80, 118, 136).

643 602 578 How the personal relationship of a chief with his kinsmen is

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the shades and the hearths which was stressed; in Porokoto's country people talked mostly of the witches; but it seemed clear that both conceptions were present when men murmured: 'The hearth bricks are bad' (*amafigo mabibi*) and they sought to cleanse them by clearing out the old fire and lighting new. 'To clear out the ashes means they take away all that dirt, the dirt which the witches have brought and the shades; it is the cause of illness.' When witches are thought to be active there is also a public complaint, and a public warning is given 'to whom it may concern' to desist.[1] This occurred in the ritual after the ground hornbill had eaten the chicken. Above all, men must admit their anger to one another: 'they fight that the homesteads may be peaceful'. The theme so familiar in Nyakyusa rituals—that quarrels must be confessed if they are to be composed—recurs yet again. Though we distinguish the rituals for 'cleansing the country' from sacrifices, on the ground that the whole community participates in the 'cleansing' while the sacrifice is esoteric, the two are closely linked, and a sacrifice commonly precedes or follows the cleansing. We turn now to the detailed accounts of celebrations for 'cleansing' in Ngonde and among the Kukwe.

(*a*) THE RATS

In Ngonde they used to clear out the ashes at the new year, at the first hoeing (in December) after 'the break of the rains'. They feared that death and disease would spread through the land if they continued living with the old fires, that the shades in the earth, both the shades of chiefs and of commoners, would be angry. Let them drive the shades away and hoe in peace. They always remembered to do so each new year; for the old men used to keep these things in mind continually, they never forgot. The Kyungu would summon the whole country to clear out the ashes; and then they would hoe in peace. And at other times, too, if prophecy came on someone, they would clear out the ashes again. 'It is to drive away the shade with the sickness that he brings. We throw out the ashes and firebrands because he has come to warm himself over the fire in our houses, we throw out the pots and winnowing baskets because he has come to see us eating; let him go there (to the grove) and eat what he asked for—we say the shades ask for food—let him eat hens, perhaps a sheep. We say the shades bring sickness to the fire, hence we throw out the ashes and make new fire with a drill.'

The nobles of Ngonde approached the Kyungu and he gave

[1] cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 109-13.

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MWAPULA: Indeed, may the illness not be great, may the children not cry by night, may the cattle increase, and the fields be fertile, and the fowls also increase. May children sleep. Our fathers always confessed in the house. Now we are shocked at what is happening. 783 796

MWANTIMWA: We say thank you, chiefs, you do not forget us. Let the sickness pass and go away, may the cattle sleep, and you women, may the children grow. May the fields be fertile; may there not be envy of one another. We are sorry because there is much illness. Our fathers say 'Why have the chiefs turned round?'

MWAMULENGA: Chief, we beg you, we thank you, indeed there is sickness. Is there anyone who says in their quarter there is much sickness (more than elsewhere)? Do we say something about sickness?

MWAMUNDA: No, Mwampiki, all of us who have come here are sick.

KILOMOO: Yes, we are all rotting.

Mwaikambo commenting on this explained:

If there is sickness one may admit and say, 'It is I, I was angry on account of such and such.' Yes, indeed, they confess openly, because he who sees in his belly (=knows in his heart) that 'It is I who have done this' trembles when his fellows speak many words thinking, 'Perhaps they have seen me.' So he confesses. When he confesses he escapes, they only grumble at him saying, 'Don't do it again.' If someone admits the others say, 'It is he, but we have punished him.' I think that even in the old days he was not driven out, because they hope that, if he has confessed, the illness he caused will go away.

MWAIALEMBA: Have you ever before heard of a hornbill eating a hen? We are horrified. Even the prophets did not speak of such an event. [787]

ANOTHER: Indeed, it has never before happened, we are glad that our chiefs have taken the initiative with these words.

ANOTHER: For this custom is old, it began long ago in the time of our fathers. It is the custom to give hope in the homesteads, that we may grow strong.

MWAMPIKI: Always, if the chief is ill it is said, 'Where are you, oh people?' All the homesteads watch over the chief when he is ill. [Mwaikambo commenting: It is said that people have the work of watching over their chief that no one may bewitch him, hence when he is ill they reproach people saying: 'Where are you?' Let the old customs be observed now (implying that they have left all the old customs and hence there is much sickness in the country).] [754] [177]

ANOTHER: There are some who say 'Let so-and-so die that I may move into his homestead. Let envy which brings sickness also go away.'

ANOTHER: If sickness appears let us tell the chief that we may all express astonishment together, asking where the illness has come from, then it will be light, if we all grumble together. [Mwaikambo commenting: [753]

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[783] [796] [753] They say that complaining drives away illness, even though the witches are not seen, and do not confess saying, 'It is we' yet they are ashamed thinking 'People have caught me' and they desist.]

MWAMULENGA: Catch anyone you see in your dreams. If someone is ill should we not all gather?

MWAMUNDA: Countrymen, give thanks that there are the chiefs.

And the company assented.

Then there was a discussion about the direction in which the chief should spit and people run. One pointing towards Tukuyu said: 'We always looked that way.' Another said: 'We always reached the boundary.'

[778] Mwafula (a village headman) came with his young son carrying a calabash of medicated water. Porokoto took a sip and spat out eastward, 'in the direction of the grove of Kabale, to the shades.'

[755] Mwamulenga shouted: 'Now we have prayed, the sickness is finished, we are present and watch over the homesteads. If we see anyone bringing sickness we will catch him and crush him on the sleeping mat.' There was a roar from the crowd, then all rushed yelling 300 yards or so eastward to the edge of the fields, and back again. Porokoto ran a little way with them, his malacca cane raised, then stopped, looking self-conscious, and strolled homeward. Everyone else scattered, chattering and laughing. On the way back we were greeted: 'You have prayed! Did you catch witches? Whom did you catch?'

Mwaalemba, senior brother of Porokoto and an expert in ritual, added one or two points in explanation:

[775] [753] In the old days we threw out the ashes, but we have not yet done so this time; we begin with the ritual on the pasture land and throw out the ashes afterwards. In the old days we threw them out of all the houses and put in fresh fire, new ash, saying 'Thou Kyala, thou shade, receive us, let us sleep here, we throw out the ashes, let sickness be slight.' Those who are angry now are our shades—those of the chiefs—they have gathered with the shades of the commoners. The medicated water means: 'Thou shade, you fathers, may we sleep, use this water for us if we are ill, may we be strong.' The water goes to the shades with these words.

Q.: Why must the women come?

M.: They call the war cry, we run swiftly, the women follow calling the war cry which means, 'You shade, we call the war cry for you that we may be pure—without anger—in our bellies, make us strong also, thou shade, may we also be pure in our bellies, this is your war cry . . .' The running and calling the war cry is to mock at him, to drive him

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away. We run with him, we leave him over there, we return and bring him in. We drive him off because he brought sickness; when we have done so we return and bring him again that we may be pure—without anger—and he also may be pure. We are with him all the time; we never throw him away. We always have the old one in the belly, an infant is he, and if I die I am with him, this earth (pointing to the earth of his homestead) never goes away, it is he. So if the crops fail when I have hoed I say: 'The shade is angry, this earth.' (*Papo nkulu tulinaguw kusila munda, matukeke jo jujo, nalonga mfwile ndinaguw—umfu ugu gutijonga nakamw jo jujo—papo longa ndemile nikuti 'unyuka akalele umfu ugu' bo fwitile.*) Yes, in the death ritual also we drive him away with his sickness, and bring him back, always the old one.

After the ritual all have normal intercourse with their wives, but the night before there was no intercourse. How should we do evil on the mats when we have not yet blessed the shade? But when we have blessed him then all of us lie on our mats again. To lie together is to overstep the ritual, the shades are shocked and say, 'How can you do this? You agreed yesterday to bless the shades and you do this, why?' Then later, if a woman bears a child which cries at night, people say, 'You overstepped the ritual, pray for the child.' Or perhaps the woman is barren. We liken the water and the war cry to what we do on the mats—the water is the shade's and the war cry is his, it is his work. When we have spoken to the shade he comes into my belly—then I come together with my wife again.

This interpretation by Mwasalemba indicates that the blowing out of water is a symbol of emission. 'It is what men do.' It has been shown in *Rituals of Kinship* that the shades are driven out of the body in the sex act; that the shade and semen are identified; and that driving off the shade is a condition of health and sanity. The fact that blowing out water is *also* a symbol of confession—admission of anger, 'bringing out all that is within'—and supplication does not invalidate Mwasalemba's interpretation, for the same act is symbolized in many ways and the same symbol expresses events which are distinct, but associated. As in so many societies, abstinence is felt to be a necessary preparation for the celebration of a ritual, and the union, real or symbolic, of husband and wife the necessary conclusion.[1] All this is intelligible only in terms of the Nyakyusa ideas about procreation discussed in *Rituals of Kinship*. The shade is the vital force in men

[1] *cf.* I. Cunnison, 'Headmanship and Ritual of Luapula Villages', *Africa*, xxvi (1956), pp. 5-13; H. A. Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe* (1927), vol. i, pp. 320-02; J. Roscoe, *The Baganda* (1911), pp. 48, 53, 55.

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Mwandisi made a great deal of the fact that at the 'throwing out of the rubbish' the village headmen ate meat *raw*.

Formerly . . . we threw away the ashes and charred brands . . . that is to drive away the shades who warm themselves over the hearth in the house; they bring us sickness, let them warm themselves over there in the long grass! Also in the long grass there we killed meat, and the priests ate it *raw*: no one saw them doing that there in the long grass; we went by day with drums, people from all the homesteads, a moving multitude . . . then we came home . . . the priests remained with their wives, they threw away their bark-cloths, they cut off morsels of meat and ate them raw. Because the priests are witches it is they who ate raw meat before we chiefs came, the priests are witches. . . . The witches and shades gather and bring sickness together, we kill a cow in the grove, we drive them away. No, they do not eat raw meat in the grove, they cook it. But at the capital if the chief has killed a cow for men to eat the priests eat meat raw. We have seen them. I, Mwandisi, have seen Mwajole and Kalambo the senior village headmen eating raw meat at my place and my wives have seen them also.

'Yes', said one of his wives, 'we saw them and we ran away saying: "Well! Fancy doing it *openly*!" ' Mwandisi continued:

The senior village headmen are witches, children of those who ate raw food long ago. Some village headmen only rush to eat a cow we have killed, but some go to eat a person; those are the witches who eat raw meat!

The function of a chief is to feed his men on beef, and in doing so he placates the witches who are commoners and who, like their forefathers, prefer their meat raw. If they do not get beef then the witches eat men.[1]

(c) SMALLPOX

The prayer and 'clearing out of the rubbish', traditionally celebrated before an approaching epidemic, was described by an elderly Christian, Fibombe. It illustrates very clearly the combination of practical precaution—isolation—and magical protection, and also the idea that sickness was brought into the country by witches.

When the chief had heard that smallpox was coming, or dysentery, he said, 'Let us pray'. Before my baptism I saw it, in the country of the

[1] cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 50-4.

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796 783 753 Penja chief, Mwalukasa. He called all his people because he heard that smallpox was coming and said: 'Let us pray.' And he called his fellow chiefs, those of the same lineage, and said: 'Let this illness not come, may it go to other chiefs. . . . Listen! I am the chief! We have heard that smallpox is approaching, who is here who rejoices at his approach? Who is here who wishes that it should kill us?'

THE CHIEFS: We, we do not rejoice that it is coming, we reject it, chief Mwalukasa, may it pass by this homestead.

THE COMMONERS: And we also reject it, may it pass by our homesteads.

MWALUKASA: And I, I reject it, may smallpox not come into our country. If there be one who has relatives in a chiefdom where there is smallpox and they come to call him to a funeral let them stay at a distance, and not sleep here, let him not go near until the illness has passed by, at the end of the year. If you witches go to fetch it, you will kill your [754] fellows with whom you are chatting now. You will not enjoy my company or build with me, the chief, if you go and bring in smallpox and kill your fellows. We pray that it may pass. [For it is believed in this country that the witches go to bring in illness, or wild animals, from a distance.]

THE COMMONERS: Yes, indeed, may it pass by.

MWALUKASA: If you go to bury a brother in a country in which there is smallpox stand afar off, tie the cow you bring to a tree and call to them: 'Here is my cow for killing, come and take it.' Take your cow, but do not go into the homestead.

And the people did as he said. Then he told them to get ready for the ritual. He took his calabash cup and three other chiefs with [769] calabash cups followed him. They blew water and prayed to Kyala and the shades. Then the people were gathered together; and the chiefs, led by Mwalukasa, ran round facing each group in turn and blowing out water towards them; the men held their shields in front of them and when the chiefs blew they shook their shields violently, as if fighting.

When all was finished then Mwalukasa said: 'When you go home, [372] throw out the ashes and the fires; all make new fire with drills.' And they all did this.

Finally he had bamboos planted with medicine on the main roads between BuPenja and BuKukwe and BuPenja and BuNyiha. No one [755] ill with smallpox, or who had lived in contact with smallpox, was allowed to pass, unless he had been ill and recovered. I saw the one bamboo clump on the boundary of Nyiha and Penja country. No one passed it, it was very fearsome (*lusiya fijo*).

As in cultivation there was a combination of ritual and science.

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793 NDEMBWE
755 NSOKI
[551] NSESA
[791] A SANGU
} Diviners consulted by Kasitile

NDISA a kinsman of Kasitile

793 755 It will be remembered that, in accordance with the custom of delegating ritual functions to a junior line, Kasitile's grandfather (44) had been appointed rain-maker and priest responsible for receiving the Kinga when they came to sacrifice at Lubaga. Kasitile thus held an important public office. He was living on the plain (where he had inherited the estate of his father's younger brother) where his own elder brother (85) died and he came up into Selya to bury him and succeed to his position. But he failed to notify the Kinga priests of his brother's death and they were [787] very angry, and told him he would die if he stayed in the homestead, so he fled back to the plain. There he fell ill, and he was carried back to Selya to be treated by the visiting Kinga priests, who told him he was sick 'because he went to the plain in a hurry and they had not given him medicine'. The idea here is that the heir to a chief or priest must cultivate the power that was in his [778] father's body by drinking medicines: Kasitile was 'losing the *ifingila* of his father by not drinking medicines'. Now *ifingila* implies *both* the medicines of chieftainship and the power which they create in the body of a man.

So Kasitile was treated and we quote his own account of what happened:

> The Kinga came to cook medicine by the tree where I pray—it is where the cattle byre of my elder brother was. They put some medicine for Jane [his senior wife] and me in beer . . . and we drank together . . . [783] and they boiled medicines in a pot and told us both to wash with the infusion every day for two months. I found a goat and called the priests Ngulyo, Njobakosa, and Kissogota and . . . they and the Kinga priests ate the meat together, and they told me to stay for two months and return to the plain again, and so I did. Then the Kinga sent for me to come back and I've come up to live. I found a cow, and called the priests and killed it at the sacred grove, Kinyangwa, and all the people ate the meat. Then the Kinga told me to move to my father's old homestead, and I did so this very year.

[753] Before we arrived, therefore, Kasitile had been in conflict with his fellow priests, and he had been very ill, and attributed his

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illness to neglect of his duty to the Kinga. All the time we were in BuNyakyusa he was ailing—possibly he suffered from tuberculosis—and one wrongdoing after another was suggested as the cause of his illness. 793 755 [753]

His case is intelligible only in terms of the conception of 'the breath of men', that is, a power akin to witchcraft thought to be legitimately exercised by village headmen and others to punish wrongdoers, but which is referred to by the victims as 'witchcraft'. This has been discussed at length elsewhere.[1] [754]

On 2nd July 1935, Kasitile had left his own house and was living with a friend in a neighbouring village. His doctor, Mwakyonde, said that he was being 'throttled by the witches' and had invited him to come and recollect himself (*ukwipelekesya*) in the tranquillity of a village of another chiefdom in which there were many people with spiritual power (*abamanga*) so that 'the witches' could not get at him. This is a common precaution in case of illness, for witches are thought not to have power ordinarily outside their own village and never beyond the chiefdom.[2] 793 754

The cause of the illness was explained as follows: Kasitile had quarrelled with Kissogota, the commoner priest, and others of the principal men of the country, because he had found them drinking the sacred beer (*ubwikemo*), brewed after the millet harvest (*vide supra*, pp. 84-5) without telling him, or sending him the pot which was his due. They invited him to drink, but he refused and they each sent him 1*s.* to beg pardon. Kasitile bought beer with one of the shillings and called the senior commoner priest, Ngulyo, and his fellows to drink saying, 'I was angry, friends, you "overstepped" me' (i.e. they had ignored his rights). He himself should have brewed when he confessed his anger, and slaughtered a calf or prepared food for them as well, but he had bought only one shilling's worth of beer and provided nothing himself. Then, when they had drunk, Kasitile fell ill. Hence it was said that the commoner priests were angry and 'ate' (i.e. bewitched) him. Kasitile's own comment was: 'The fault lies with the young priests (Ngulyo, a young man, had inherited his father's position), they are useless as priests . . . I was not told of that ritual beer, yet the medicine comes from me, from this home where I keep it. They should have come to me to get it and put it with the millet in the holy pot. They drank the beer without medicine. It is they who have brought cold and hunger on the country. I think the [578] [753] [689] [731] [789]

[1] Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 91-121, 167-9. [2] *op. cit.*, pp. 102-3.

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793 trouble is that Mwaipopo (the chief 116) is getting old. . . .'
754 Here Kasitile suggested two different causes for the scarcity in the
[731] country: (*a*) the negligence of the priests, and (*b*) the senility of the
[789] chief. In the old days Mwaipopo would have been smothered, as Angombwike explained (*vide supra*, p. 63).

[753] On the 9th, Kasitile, much troubled by his cough at night,
[757] expressed a great desire for the return of the missionary nurse to Kabembe hospital. 'She is killing us by her absence, the black people don't know anything about these things, only the Europeans. Why, I went there and the dresser just gave me an injection without taking my temperature—no European ever does that.'

[787] The following day he sent off his sons with 10 c. to inquire about
[753] his case from a diviner. The diviner said: 'The wives at his home are gossiping to other people about their husband. People want the husband's body to be light. It is not Jane, because she is his favourite, but the others.' Kasitile said:

I shan't do anything, I said 'Let's leave it.' I am still in Butola [the village to which he moved for safety]. Mwakyonde is giving me medicine for my disease. It drives out the cold which is in my body. Yes, the cold is the breath of the witches coming to throttle me—it's due to my
755 wives' gossip. But it started as a quarrel with other people [non-
753 relatives] first. One day I went to drink beer in Bujege and that night I fell sick; that is how it began. Men are complaining because I, a chief, a senior, do not cook food for them. They throttle me on that account. They say: 'Let us see whether he is really a chief, a senior!' But others say: 'He has done no wrong.' Yes, the sickness took me on the way home from the beer. Perhaps Kyala asked: 'What has he
[776] done?' and found I had done no wrong. If there had not been a Kyala who saves us I would have been dead.

[787] When I consulted a diviner he struck a spear and looked along it, then he said: 'The disease now is from his wives—the earlier attack was from men, but this one is from his wives. When they gather at the hearth they say: "Come hither, we see him where he sleeps."'

754 'Are the wives witches?' we asked.
753 Kasitile replied:

Yes. They say: 'There is a favourite, we are not beloved.' If a man's wives are good the witches can get into the house, but their cold breath dissipates quickly; you are given medicine and recover quickly; but if the wives are bad they gather together the medicine and press it down, so that it is powerless. One of my wives is very bad, her lineage is bad, it is she who calls to her aid the heavy ones, the witches. The

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younger one[1] gossips with her fellow, she does not go to the witches herself, but just talks to the other wife who calls the witches to her aid. These two wives say: 'The favourite has borne many children to her husband; we are poor' [i.e. the favourite gets an unfair share of her husband's attentions].

Kasitile speaks of his wives as 'witches' which, according to Nyakyusa ideas, they were, if they injured him, but he was also in the wrong to have shown his preference for Jane so clearly. As was shown in *Rituals of Kinship*, the shades are thought to punish such favouritism.

Towards the end of August Kasitile went to consult Ndembwe, a diviner and doctor, living nearly a day's journey away in the hills, who used a 'stick in the ground' as a divining rod. On his return Kasitile reported:

> Ndembwe says it's the 'breath of men', not the wives, but the dispute about the beer. I paid him 1*s.* and drank three preparations of medicine at his place. He is coming here—I have found some beer and I am sending to call him tomorrow. Then Kasitile added confidentially: About the source of the 'breath' I am uncertain. Ndembwe suggested testing my wives. He can see the heavy ones, for in Ndali country he has drunk much medicine to give him spiritual power (*amanga*). He told me to come home, not to go back to Mwakyonde's country, and he is coming to give me medicine to drink and also to sprinkle medicine in the house. He will sleep here and see who it is that comes—he will know if the wives are heavy, or if it is the people of the country.

Kasitile's uncertainty was apparent. The first diviner had stated clearly that the sickness came from the witchcraft of the wives, but Kasitile wanted a further test.

We were away from Selya for some time and did not hear of any further developments in Kasitile's illness until early in 1937. By then a new reason for his ill-health had been put forward, viz. his impiety in cutting all the branches off a tree growing at the entrance to a sacred grove which has sprung up over his father's grave. He cut the tree because it was encroaching on his homestead. Then he fell ill and he went to consult Ndembwe again.

> He asked me: 'Have you done something wrong at home?' I replied: 'No, I have done nothing wrong.' 'But the oracle says you have done wrong at home.' I said: 'Perhaps it is because I cut a tree at the

[1] Sister of the favourite Jane. To accuse Jane's sister would cast a slur on Jane, for witchcraft is normally hereditary.

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753 entrance to the grove?' Ndembwe told me, 'You will get no cattle',
688 and indeed the cows are aborting. He told me: 'Brew beer and look
[787] for a sheep[1] and pray to your grandfather.'

782 Kasitile did not find an animal for sacrifice. He slaughtered a kid 'just for meat', killing it near the grove, but without praying or taking any of the meat into the grove, for it is not customary to offer goat's meat to the shades. His health improved a little, for a
787 time, but again he got worse and went off to see another diviner, saying: 'Perhaps there is some other cause; perhaps Ndembwe is mistaken.' He decided to go to consult an oracle some distance away 'because the oracle near home does not convince us; those who live near know all our wrongdoings; those at a distance don't know the affairs of the homesteads here'. This time Godfrey Wilson was invited to accompany him 'since he was his friend'.

Record of G.W. 8/2/37

787 We left Isumba about 7 a.m. and walked for an hour over the hills
753 through the bush. Kasitile had sent his wives, Jane and Kilileli, on ahead to tell the diviner, Nsoki, that we were coming. . . . He came in
[791] from the fields to meet us and was taken aback by the presence of a
186 European. Kasitile kept saying: 'Do not be startled, he is from home, he is our friend.' . . . Food was served, then Nsoki's wife brought out some cooked millet porridge for the divination. He broke off a large piece and began to roll it between his hands. He smeared ointment on his hands and added powdered medicine. . . . He rolled and rolled, sometimes throwing the ball up and catching it again, spitting on his hands meantime. He murmured as he rolled, then at last he said to Kasitile, 'Speak!' Kasitile called his two wives to come near, and he explained his symptoms and the circumstances, how the sickness had fallen on him just after he had cut the tree in the sacred grove.

Nsoki asked for other possibilities. Kasitile: 'Perhaps the country is angry—I am a senior there. If it is the fathers who are angry I admit
[684] having done wrong. Perhaps my wives have committed adultery in the long grass and they are the cause of the illness.' Nsoki rolled and rolled the ball of porridge speaking aloud: 'It is Kyala above?' (looking up).
[775] Kasitile interrupted him: 'Yes, indeed, Kyala, but Kyala stands where he stood at home, does he stand alone? He stands with the fathers.' Nsoki (as he rolled the porridge): 'Your fathers are angry about that grove?' Then the ball of porridge flattened out in his hands and he broke off . . . 'No, that is not the cause' (*vide* plate 10*b*).

Rolling it into a ball again he went on: 'Your wives have committed

[1] This was Kasitile's own account. Others told us that he had been advised to look for a *bull*.

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adultery?' Again the ball flattened. 'It denies it.'[1] Then Kasitile, obviously dissatisfied, spoke: 'Nsoki, three cows have slipped their calves at my home, I sent to Ndembwe and he said: "Your fathers are angry, you cut a tree, Mwakisambwe (30) is angry; seek something", so I sought a kid and I recovered. Later I took my bill-hook and cut all round. Now the illness has begun again, and I thought perhaps it was because I did not go to BuKinga to buy a bull, because I sought only a kid?' Nsoki (no longer rolling the porridge): 'Perhaps my oracle is mistaken, it denies it, Kyala above has sent the breath (*imbepo*) to discipline you. I asked the oracle saying, "Perhaps it is the fathers?" but see, it denied it.' Kasitile: 'No, it is not mistaken.' Then he told all over again the story of his pruning the grove and of his illness and of his recovery after killing the kid, concluding 'then I cut again and fell sick.' Nsoki: 'But Kasitile, see! There is much illness about, Kyala has sent it all through the country, to discipline us.'

Shortly afterwards we left. I apologized to Kasitile for spoiling his divination for it was obvious, from his face, that it had gone wrong. He assured me that I had done no wrong but agreed that Nsoki had been afraid of me. . . . 'He feared your body, Mwaipaja [G.W.], you are impressive (*nsiya*), no one builds together with Europeans, he feared to speak. . . . Do you suppose that Kyala alone sent the fever? No! He stands with people, he stands with the shades.' I asked him what he thought. 'Ndembwe's oracle was not mistaken, the shades were indeed angry, but now Nsoki's oracle denies it. It really denied it, I saw the porridge with my own eyes, so I think the illness is from another source now. When he spoke of the "breath of Kyala" he meant "men".' Kasitile lowered his voice as he said this.

QUESTION: But what quarrel have they with you?

KASITILE: None! The oracle denied this. I have done no wrong . . . (later on) He spoke of the fathers, but he was afraid to speak out—they are angry; I should seek something.

QUESTION: To eat with whom?

KASITILE: With the village headman . . . (later on) See Mwaipaja, I cut the grove and at once I fell ill. If you come from doing something and fall ill, do you not begin to wonder? The shades are angry.

He was quite incoherent. First he said the 'breath of men', then the shades, then that the oracle denied the shades—'I saw it do so'—then that it denied witchcraft and that anyway he'd given no occasion for it. The one thing clear was that the divination could not be accepted as it stood. Kyala never acts alone in Nyakyusa thought, and Kasitile's conversation reflected the uncertainty of mind which he had gone to Nsoki to have resolved and which had not been resolved. His opinion

[1] He explained later that 'if the porridge becomes fluid and soft, that means it agrees to what has been said; if it does not change, it denies it'.

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787 clearly inclined to the shades as it had before the divination, but as
753 before the certain conviction was lacking.

Four days later (12/2/37) Kasitile went to Nsesa in Kituli village to consult the oracle again 'for that of Nsoki went wrong'. He told us afterwards 'This oracle supported the finding of Ndembwe's. It said:
[775] [769] Your kinsman who is dead is angry; he says, "Why did you not celebrate the ritual? I am tired of the hair (*Ngatele nasyo inwili*). And what did you offer your father after cutting that tree?" ' Here yet another cause of Kasitile's illness is suggested—the neglect of the death ritual of a kinsman. The implication is that the chief mourners have
[765] [302] not yet performed the concluding rite of shaving which makes it possible for the deceased to join his fathers. The hair which the mourners shave off is called 'the hair of the corpse'.

QUESTION: What are you going to do then?

[688] [602] KASITILE: I shall charge the young man, son of my dead kinsman, with neglect, and tell him to celebrate the ritual that the shades which have bound me may go out of my body.

QUESTION: And the bull?

KASITILE: If I can find one I shall kill it.

QUESTION: Who will be there?

[793] KASITILE: The priests will be there, Ngulyo, Kissogota, Njobakosa, Mwalukuta and Mwakasukula,[1] and also Mwaipopo (116) himself. Were I a commoner I should kill alone with my younger brothers, but since I am a public personage (*ndi nkulumba*) the village headmen are there. (To Mwaikambo, the clerk.) It is good at your home in the hills; here things are bad.

QUESTION: But they also have shades?

[775] KASITILE: But they are not important. Look you, I just cut a tree and
[178] they have seized me and dwell in my body. Are there sacred groves in the hills? Do men visit them? There in the hills rituals have died; the puberty ritual and the rituals of the groves are celebrated very little.

787 On 27th March Kasitile looked in to say that he was going to con-
791 sult a visiting Sangu doctor 'from very far off' about his cough, but
753 G.W. had better not come lest his presence spoil the divination. Kasitile came again after the consultation, full of excitement. 'What a doctor! That is a doctor indeed! That is a diviner! He took an axe and divined with it; he took coppers which I brought and threw them in a little pot, together with the axe, and ash, and he said: "You also take ash and throw it in" and I did so. Then he looked into the little pot and said: "You built on the plain!" He knew this without being told! I said: "Yes".'

SANGU: There was a quarrel there.

[1] The last two are priests of Mbyanga (*vide* p. 80) who did not in fact come. Mwamakunda, Kasitile's assistant, who did come is not mentioned.

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KASITILE: Yes indeed.
SANGU: Now your body is sick, you are coughing. 787
KASITILE: Yes indeed, I am ill, and I am coughing a great deal. 791
SANGU: Yes, it is that quarrel down there. You came with the cough from the plain. 753
KASITILE: Yes, I came with it.
SANGU: You are a priest, you are a senior priest. (He knew this himself!)
KASITILE: Yes indeed.
SANGU: But the cough comes from the quarrel in the plain. If you were not a priest you would have died.
KASITILE: Indeed, we quarrelled over land, over the boundaries, on the plain. I hoed someone else's land—the land of a commoner there. [578]
SANGU: They placed something to injure you.

Kasitile paused in his narrative and we asked how the 'something' operated.

KASITILE: In dreams, by means of their witchcraft. [754]

The Sangu told me: 'It is this which causes you to cough continually, but there is something else also, you did not move to the plain from here without trouble.'

KASITILE: No, I moved with an accusation against me. [775]
SANGU: Yes indeed, you did wrong and now your fathers are very angry. [776]
KASITILE: Yes, I cut a tree.
SANGU: Mother! You cut a tree? The fathers and Kyala are brooding over you, Kyala is angry and broods over you. Pray, pray very much. It is you who are throttling the cattle of the country.

We expressed surprise and Kasitile continued: 'Yes, indeed. The Sangu said: "It is your wrongdoing (in cutting the tree) which is causing the cows to abort. I will clear out the thing which came with you from the plain. Bring 2*s.* tomorrow." He's a great doctor, Mwaipaja.' [688]

The astonishing thing was that Kasitile, a man of considerable intelligence and inclined to query the truth of the revelations of some oracles, was so much impressed by the fact that the foreign doctor (staying in the country) knew that he was a priest and had sojourned in the plain, though to anyone knowing KiNyakyusa well his connexion with the plain was apparent in his speech, and his bearing indicated him as a personage.

Talking of the divination three days later, Kasitile told us the Sangu doctor had said: 'You have done wrong at home. This Kyala (pointing to the little pot into which he was looking) knows that Lwembe and the Kinga and your father are angry, your father is very important, he works with Kyala, he is with him.' 755

As a treatment for the cough the doctor put various ingredients with 791

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some live coals into a small calabash and held them against Kasitile's chest 'to clear out the blood of coughing'. To pacify the shades a pot of medicines in water was put on the fire; the doctor, Kasitile, and his 'senior wife' (actually her younger sister, as Jane was away) each held the pot with a crooked finger. Then Kasitile and all his wives and children were sprinkled with the hot medicines. And the doctor told Kasitile to sacrifice a bull.

During the following week preparations for the sacrifice went ahead. Kasitile walked for some hours through the forest to call Mwamakunda, his fellow priest who always assisted him in the celebrations at Lubaga and 'sprinkling the country'. Mwamakunda is a very old man, contemporary of Kasitile's father, and he asked: 'Are you bringing your European to the sacrifice?'

KASITILE: Yes.

MWAMAKUNDA: But your father Mwakanjoki (60) did not know any Europeans, he feared them, he died without ever meeting one. After your father died, when your elder brother was alive, Europeans came —Germans—and cut down a tree, the *umwali* tree in the sacred grove near Kamesu; blood gushed out, it shouted so that it was heard in BuKinga.

Kasitile explained that the Germans had wanted timber. Afterwards Mwaipopo (the chief 116) sought a sheep and they tried to put the grove to rights ('close up') by sacrificing it. This was the tree beside which the sacred meat was always put when they sacrificed in the grove. Now one branch has grown up again from the roots.

Mwamakunda went on: 'But you did wrong at the beginning not to take the European to pray, and to tell Mwakanjoki (60) that he should not be afraid, the European has made himself our friend.' Kasitile, reporting the interview to us said: 'I concealed that we went together to the grove to pray (*vide supra*, p. 115) and Mwamakunda told me: "Let the European take something, let it stay overnight in the house, and go with him, and pray very much. . . . Mwakanjoki has gone off in a huff from your home, you have offended him yourself. Go with the European, take him to your father's home. Now your father has taken offence, he is shaking your body by night because you cut the tree; you have done wrong." ' i.e. two causes for the anger of the shades and Kasitile's consequent sickness were given: (i) the cutting of the tree by Mwakanjoki's grave and (ii) Godfrey Wilson's presence at rituals and at Kasitile's homestead. So before the sacrifice of expiation for pruning the grove was performed Godfrey Wilson went to be introduced to Kasitile's shades for the second time.

Record of G.W. 9/4/37

In the evening as the sun was setting, I went to Kasitile's house with a cloth and 2*s*. He put them in the house, took down the calabash which

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783 them to speak out, because if they do not admit that it is they, then the
782 ritual fails.'

QUESTION: What does that mean?

754 KASITILE: It is witchcraft!

QUESTION: Witchcraft? (in apparent surprise).

KASITILE: Yes, it is their witchcraft, the priests gathered with the shade, they bring a chill on my body.

QUESTION: Pythons? (still in surprise).

KASITILE: Yes, they fly in their witchcraft to come here, they speak
[775] with the shades, saying: 'Punish him! Let him find us something to eat!' They call the shades to help. Hence I sought something for them to eat that they should be satisfied.

QUESTION: But I thought witchcraft and the shades were quite separate? (still in apparent surprise).

KASITILE: No, they are together, look you, did not Kissogota boast? He said, 'Indeed we came, it is us, it is us. Why did you cut that branch? But now there is no accusation against you.' He boasted very much. He said: 'We have power, if we like we can give him worms.' [It is Njobakosa who was heard to say this, but Kasitile's personal quarrel was with Kissogota.] Did I not tell you that I had worms when I came up from the plain? I had them! I went to doctors and the diviners said: 'You are a chief, you were in the plain, why do you not kill a bull on your return?' Then when I killed a bull the worms disappeared! Where did they come from? They came from the priests, they called the shades to their aid. So I admitted to Kissogota, saying: 'Indeed I have done wrong, I your wife, I Maloba' (86, the feminine form of the name is used).

QUESTION: So, a white person (*umwelu*, *vide infra*, p. 141) cannot be a priest, but only a witch, a heavy one?

KASITILE: Yes, indeed, how can a white person take hold of the ritual? His fellows will drive him away. See! To a ritual do we call everyone?

No!

KASITILE: And is my home near to Kissogota's?

No, he lives at a distance.

KASITILE: Yes, indeed, it is the black ones (*batitu*) whom we call because it is they who punish us chiefs.

[648] QUESTION: Well, then, is the anger of the shades always provoked by the witches? What about sores (*imindu*) on the mouth?[1] What about
[775] madness if a commoner does not perform the death ritual?

KASITILE: No, I do not lie, that is different. Sores on the mouth come
● [753] from the shades, the witches are not there, and if a commoner fails to perform the ritual, madness also comes from the shades, it comes

[1] Cf. Monica Wilson, *Rituals of Kinship*, pp. 181, 219.

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indeed from the whispering of men and the shades here, but people speak openly, saying: 'Why does he not celebrate the ritual?' The witches do not come into it.

QUESTION: Well, when the witches do throttle someone, do they always call shades, or not?

KASITILE: No, sometimes they throttle a man alone, and the shades are not there.

QUESTION: But your sickness?

KASITILE: Now the priests in their witchcraft gathered with the shades. The day after we had celebrated Njobakosa came to my place and said: 'We have finished then!' I replied: 'Yes, my body is better now, but the cough is separate, it is from Kyala.' And did you not hear what Mwaipopo asked in his cups—'How did the doctor (the Sangu) know that you are a priest? And that you had done wrong? Indeed they (Kissogota and his fellows) had told him!'

QUESTION: What did he mean by that?

KASITILE: That they had gone to the doctor in dreams to tell him.

Asked about Kissogota's words: 'You are impressive, we are cannibals, we are', Kasitile explained: 'It means, "You chiefs kill cattle for us, you are impressive, that is your impressiveness. Do we kill cattle? No! We eat men, we are witches." Because when we have killed cattle they receive blood, their witchcraft goes away, it stays in its house.'

QUESTION: And your reply, 'You are impressive, you are'?

KASITILE: I replied: 'You are impressive, you are, you are witches, if I were alone what would I do? It is you who brought the chilling breath on me and said I had done wrong. Even though I have not done wrong, you wish to eat meat. If I walk about among you, my body shrinks, it fears.'

Mwaipopo (the chief 116) had also prayed with water the night before the sacrifice, he helps me in prayer and if he prays at his house, I help him. We pray with water to bring out everything; if I do not pray with water then something is left within. I summon all the gods, all the fathers, and all the shades. (*Apa tukwiputa namesi ko kusyosya ilisyu loysa, lenga ndikwiputa namesi po lisyele limo nkati. Nikumpala kyala gwesa, tata gwesa, abasyuka bosa.*)

QUESTION:

KASITILE: Yes, when Kissogota and his fellows came in their witchcraft to call my shades to their aid, I saw them in dreams, I saw them! And if they correct Mwaipopo like this in witchcraft, together with the shades, he sees them; he complies immediately, he seeks a cow. And if they just come to throttle me I see them. It is the village headmen of the country who come to throttle me, the shades are not there, no, only Kissogota and his fellows, they stand with the shades, not the others they come and suck my blood and they go away again. I do not speak,

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754 but I see them. It's taboo to speak. They must seek blood and they go
775 off; we fear them!

753 QUESTION: Why do you chiefs never speak out if you are throttled?

KASITILE: If I speak how many would there be to name? Very many!

[689] For us it's taboo to accuse a man of witchcraft, but the commoners
[554] accuse one another. Look you, do few people keep you company?
Many!

Like us chiefs, everyone comes. It's taboo for us to speak out, we fear. Look you, when Mwambene (Mwaipopo 116) and I were alone we feared to throw out the beer, we said: 'If we throw it out will they leave?' But when Kissogota came, he said: 'All right, I will throw it
[152] out myself.' We fear the fierce great priests, the terrible witches, they are angry.[1] We shrink when they appear.

[622] The village headmen of the country call on the priests for help against us, they whisper by the fire, the priests come in their witchcraft,
[793] they call on my shades saying, 'Let us punish him', also they eat, together with the shades. Our shades never initiate anything, never; they look to the priests. But with a commoner the shade may initiate matters himself. Yes, people whisper indeed, but is that witchcraft? No! They whisper openly and ask, 'Why did you not perform the ritual?' But even although people are silent, still the shade comes
[688] saying, 'Why did you not perform the ritual? I am on the road.' He initiates the thing himself.

QUESTION: But don't people eat meat at the ritual of a commoner?

KASITILE: Yes, and if he does not celebrate it they accuse him, but they accuse him openly.

QUESTION: If the heir buries him with a few cattle?

688 KASITILE: If a rich commoner dies and the heir buries him with only
775 one cow, the shades are angry and the people also; their chilling
774 breath comes on his body, perhaps he falls ill himself, perhaps his child falls ill, but the people and witches do not meet together, people are angry here, and the shades there; all of them and the shades too, because he has celebrated with one cow only. People are angry because
[787] they wish to eat the meat. But the oracle says, 'The shades are angry.' It does not speak of people, it knows that people also are angry, but it speaks of the shades. And at the celebration he prays in the evening, the next day he calls people and kills a cow, and throws the sacred
[783] meat in the banana grove, saying, 'Here is your meat, father.' People say, 'Indeed he did wrong, his father was angry', but they do not confess saying, 'It was we', no, they say 'the shades' . . .

[826] We chiefs have bodies which are different, the commoners arrived
[554] first in the country, they ate raw food, we fear them saying, 'They eat raw food.' It is we who followed and brought fire. To us they confess

[1] *Imipepo indesi mitalala.* The noun class implies size, ferocity, and dislike.

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(*b*) MEDICINES AND MORALITY

Doctors classify most of their medicines in terms of the supposed mystical causes of disease, and the determining factor in diagnosis is what quarrels have occurred in the patient's circle of kinsmen and friends, or what wrongdoing he has on his conscience. The medicines mentioned to us by various doctors were for treatment of sickness caused by 'the breath of men', by sorcery, by vengeance magic, by the protective medicine put on wives, by the anger of the shades or living senior relatives, by incest, by spearing or binding with ropes,[1] or abnormal birth. Only a few of the medicines listed were for the treatment of observable symptoms such as fever, too frequent periods, or swelling after snake-bite, rather than the supposed mystical cause.

The emphasis on discovering the mystical cause and counteracting it was shown very clearly when Godfrey Wilson accompanied Mwakyonde, the doctor, to the home of a patient, a young man so weak that he could not lift a limb. Mwakyonde spent two minutes examining him, and provided leaves with which he was poulticed, and a medicine which was rubbed into cuts made all over his body, but the greater part of the day was devoted to discussing the quarrel between kinsmen, from which his illness was thought to have arisen, to persuading the kinsmen to 'speak out', and to preparing and administering a medicine which would cause the death of any one of them who was working sorcery against another.

Medicine for the treatment of a disease is held to be ineffective —at the best a temporary palliative—unless the underlying cause is discovered and dealt with. For example, doctors spoke of possessing a medicine against *ilyepa*, the disease caused by a kinsman to whom a debt in cattle is due, but it is not effective alone. 'The wrongdoer drinks medicine and pays his kinsman. He must pay, for though the medicine may cure him temporarily the disease will come again if he does not pay his debt.'

The ultimate cause of disease is believed to be friction in social relationships—a breach in moral law—and so the study of medicines takes us directly to problems of morality. There is a deep-rooted conviction that medicines will not be effective if there is quarrelling in the family which uses them. This applies not only to medicines used in sickness, but also to those for protection

[1] *op. cit.*, pp. 172-9.

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753 578 and achievement. An account of the treatment of a field for protection against wild pig emphasizes this.

789 241 [689] If people wish to protect a crop from wild pig they go to a doctor to ask for medicine. When he gives it to them he tells them that there must be no quarrelling in the home after they have barricaded the field. Four women go to the field with the husband of the one who cultivates it. They go after sunset. One women is shaved; her head is a symbol of the garden devastated by pig. A second woman, who keeps [302] her hair, has a head-pad on her head and carries bananas with medicine. She enters the field and eats the bananas. The husband climbs a hill at a little distance, and two of the women go into the long grass close to the field. The bald pate twists a head-pad and the one with hair smears it with medicine and as they do so they look towards their [831] husband and abuse him saying, 'You lay with your mother', and he swears at them saying, 'The leather aprons of your fathers' . . . and many other insults. Then the women walk round the edge of the field, sprinkling medicines, and they go out the way they came in. The circular pad is a symbol of the barricade placed round the field. When [262] they return home they do not eat but go to sleep hungry (though the clever ones eat beforehand). If they quarrel, the pig finishes the food. It is as if quarrelling destroyed the fierceness, the power, of the protective medicine; you must put aside all quarrelling that the medicine may be powerful. If the pigs come it is as if there were a quarrel, so the woman and her husband quarrel in the field mimicking the pig. The husband on the hill is like the pig approaching the field, his wives in the long grass also represent pigs. . . . The husband and his wives quarrel only in the field. If, when the maize is ripe, the husband beats one of his wives for any cause she does not go to pick the maize herself, a friend picks it for her. If she goes in her anger she finds the maize finished, nothing but earth is left.

789 689 Here the link between medicines and morality is made plain. Quarrelling weakens medicines of all sorts and renders them ineffective. But a mimic quarrel between husband and wives in the fields renders the medicine effective. It represents the battle between the pig and the medicines. There is a suggestion elsewhere [775] (pp. 69, 113) that pigs are *sent* by the shades when kinsmen or neighbours quarrel, but in the account just quoted it is implied that quarrelling in the home directly injures the medicine.

278 754 789 In themselves, many medicines are neutral. They may be put to good or evil ends, but because they are mysterious and powerful, they are feared, in the same sort of way as atomic energy is feared in contemporary society. Men use medicines themselves 'for purely peaceful purposes', but they are shocked at

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789 751 754 [753] are said to give their wives a medicine (without their knowledge) which will cause any man who lies with them to fall ill of gonorrhoea or some other venereal disease. Many Christians believe in this medicine and some inquired whether Europeans did not use it also. One family of doctors are specialists in it:

[791] The sons of Manyafu are very famous, they are great doctors. People fear them very much. No one can steal anything belonging to them or run off with their wives. If a man runs off with a wife of theirs, he will return their wife and pay. . . . Because when he has slept with the woman by night they stink in each other's nostrils, the woman stinks in the face of the man and he likewise in hers. And if rain falls by night the roof comes off the hut in which they sleep and the rain enters. Perhaps the man quarrels with the woman, perhaps frogs and snakes are numerous, perhaps gourds sprout in the house—sometimes they sprout bringing evil. So it is also if a man has run off with the wife of another and the husband goes to the sons of Manyafu. They agree to work, but he must pay them.

[681] Lyandileko, whose husband's family have owned a 'horn' for generations, was very insistent that vengeance magic maintained law and order for it could injure only the guilty. 'A thief feared to steal lest he be caught by my father-in-law (Mwaisyelage). He feared the horn if he used sorcery. He feared to seize another's cow thinking, "They will go to Mwaisyelage".'

[684] And protective medicines which cause an adulterer to fall ill of gonorrhoea, or a thief to die, are considered perfectly legitimate; the misfortune would not have befallen the man unless he had done wrong.

[648] The prohibition by the government of the *mwafi* oracle has puzzled people. Medicines are admittedly dangerous, but it is held that Europeans 'encourage' witches and sorcerers by forbidding the use of the one effective weapon against them, and doctors with vengeance magic or other strong medicines 'fear the fate of the *mwafi* doctors'. There is an inescapable contradiction here, the Nyakyusa relying on *mwafi* and vengeance magic as a means of discovering criminals, and the Europeans punishing any doctor found administering poison, or intimidating people by threats. Furthermore, it is widely believed that Europeans themselves use strong medicines made up with blood. Any Europeans without an obvious occupation are suspect of being *abanyambuta*, who go around killing people and taking their blood for the Government to use for medicines. One of our European friends,

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a missionary, was warned by her servants before Godfrey Wilson's arrival in her neighbourhood 'not to go out at night as there were *abapembuta* about, sent by the Government to kill people and take their blood', and women going for firewood made a long detour to avoid his camp. One was overheard asking when she caught sight of him: 'Is that the man who kills people?' Angombwike explained that, since all really strong Nyakyusa medicines contained human blood, it was argued that European medicines, which were so powerful, must contain it also. 'They follow their own customs.'

It seems obvious to the Nyakyusa that Europeans must have strong medicines because their confidence and success are so great. Moreover, it is held (in theory) that they are immune to attacks from witchcraft. X, who had been a clerk and lost his job, and was bitter, expanded on this:

> People say that Europeans have *inyifuila* (*sidе* p. 58), see they are brave, they do not fear, if someone seizes a spear they do not fear, they just come to him, they are very brave. And also the witches say that they are unable to choke Europeans. When we hear people boasting of their mystical power (*amasɛgɛ*) we always say to them: 'But if that is so, go and choke a European, show us!' Then they always say, 'Oh no, we can't do that, when we go to a European house at night we find it all lighted up and flaming, we can't get near them.' I think this is the power of the Holy Spirit which you Europeans have.

He came of a well-known family of doctors and perhaps spoke from first-hand knowledge. He just laughed at the suggestion that the light might come from lamps. But the fact that Europeans were held to be immune did not prevent our servants and friends attributing our recurring attacks of malaria to witchcraft.

(c) DOCTORS

Among the Nyakyusa, as perhaps in every society, the doctors with the greatest reputation are those at a distance, and a high proportion of the practitioners in the country are of foreign lineages, their fathers, or grandfathers, or great-grandfathers having come in, bringing medicines with them, and begun to practice. In fact, we were assured that there were no Nyakyusa doctors who were famous, they were all Sangu, or Kinga, or Kisi, or from Ngonde or Misuku in Nyasaland, but detailed investigation proved this to be false. The trade in medicines from a distance is a very old one and continues today. As we have seen,

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The shade is the principle of life represented by seed, or the root of a banana, or a tree growing by a grave;[1] the hero embodied a vital force which caused grain to sprout and clay cattle to breathe. The line between a hero, the shade of one of his successors, and the shade of a chief is a very faint one. They all have power over people other than their descendants and are approached by hereditary priests. As some elderly men of Ngonde put it: 'The nobles, not the living Kyungu, go to the groves of the Kyungus to pray; they go because the Kyungus who have died are shades to us all (*bo bayuka betu twese*).'

The heroes had miraculous power but it differed in degree, rather than in kind, from that possessed by their descendants. Like that of the divine kings and chiefs it lay both in their own bodies and in medicines, especially the *ifingila* which is still used by chiefs.

Kyala and Lwembe dwell 'beneath' (*pasi*) with the shades, as opposed to 'above' (*kumwanya*), which implied traditionally 'on earth' not 'in the sky'. There is no hint of a sky god in the traditional system, and the distinction between black and white offerings, which the early missionaries took to be a distinction between offerings to the shades and to a sky god,[2] was unequivocally interpreted by the priests in another fashion. The white (*musela*) offering to Kyala or Ngulube is a symbol not of purity, but of an unclouded sky, and the numinous quality of the heroes is conceived of as contamination, not holiness. Like the shades, the heroes must be 'driven off' lest men go mad, and it is when they have driven them away that men are *bela*—white, innocent, free of anger. Men should be *bela* but this is never cited as an attribute of the pagan Kyala. It is the terribleness, not the goodness or purity of God of which the Nyakyusa are aware. This is underlined by the fact that a madman who, 'when he comes home rushes off', and 'does not see that his fellows are human beings,' and who 'has a loose heart' (i.e. is passionate and quarrelsome), or 'whose heart curls up like a leaf in the sun, or turns upside down', is called 'Mbasi' or is said to have been 'caught hold of by Kyala'.

Kyala is one hero among others but, as has been shown, the name is *also* used in the sense of 'the lord'. Kyala as 'the lord' of a commoner or junior kinsman is distinct from Kyala the hero with his own place in a genealogy and his own shrine. The difference

[1] Monica Wilson, *Rituals of Kinship*, pp. 103-7, 211 *et passim*.
[2] P. Fülleborn, *Das Deutsche Njassa- und Ruwuma-Gebiet*, pp. 320-6.

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his cave and who, though a creator, is equalled by other heroes and dwells in the bowels of the earth, there was Kyala an ultimate power and first cause, unique and omnipotent, who dwelt in heaven 'above'. The implications of *kumwanya* (above) have changed along with the implications of *Kyala*.

The new balance between the different elements in pagan thought was reflected in everyday speech. In the 1930's men spoke constantly of the shades (*abapuke*), the witches (*abalozi*), and 'the breath of men' (*imbepo ya bantu*); Kyala did not figure much in the conversation of pagans. But in 1955, from the moment when the bus I arrived in skidded off the road and the passengers began assuring each other that *Kyala alimo* (God is present), because no one had been injured, I heard the name constantly. Such a change is hard to prove, but the impression of a marked shift in emphasis was strong.

The conception of the hero Mbasi has also radically altered. During the years before 1914 a man, with two boys in attendance, posed as Mbasi and went round Selya by night, growling in a gruff voice that he was Mbasi, and seizing cattle and fowls and food. He was eventually taken by night, by some Christians, and died after seven months' imprisonment in Tukuyu. Today the Christians never use 'Mbasi' for God, but sometimes identify him with 'Satan', and the pagans use 'Lwembe' rather than 'Mbasi'.

The range of relationships in space was narrow in the traditional Nyakyusa society, and the range of relationship in time was correspondingly so. Only a limited number of chiefdoms co-operated in sacrifice to a hero (and often they seem to have acted separately, rather than in concert), and all historical time was contained in the genealogies depicted. There was a dawn when men ate food raw and lived without fire, or cattle, or chiefs, but history began when the heroes descended from the mountains, ten or twelve generations ago. Time was telescoped when all the known world lay within 100 miles.

A social revolution occurred once, with the coming of the chiefs, but then time stood still, and ever since the heroic age has remained the pattern of right behaviour. Departure from the rituals laid down spells madness and death, for 'Kyala created us so'. Part of primeval reality is the conflict of generations expressed in the myth of the seduction of a young wife by her husband's father, in the rules of avoidance, and in the ritual of the 'coming out'. There is no convention of fighting on this last occasion (as

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out all the anger that is within', 'admitting that I have done wrong', begging pardon (*ukupeleya*) and *also* a symbol of emission and so of driving off the shades (*vide supra*, pp. 104, 108-110; 139). Good health depends upon good social relationships, and of one who is ailing it is commonly said: 'It seems as if they (unspecified) had hated her.' Further, the proper working of the natural order is held to depend upon the proper working of the social order. Drought, or 'cold', or pestilence falls on a chiefdom if there is quarrelling between chief and priests, and the anger of the Lwembe with his 'sons' will shrivel the crops of Selya. The heroes, the shades, many of the men of power (*abamanga*), and many medicines help to maintain an orderly universe; only the witches and sorcerers work against it. In short, order and right living are an integral part of Nyakyusa religion as they are of Christianity.

The ultimate good is the power of fertility, of generation, which lies in the heroes and shades; the punishment for evil-doing is ill-health of body or mind and sterility. And towards the heroes and shades, who are both life-givers and avengers, the attitude of men is clearly ambivalent: the shades are driven away—'let them warm themselves over there in the long grass', men say when they throw out the ashes (*vide supra*, pp. 109-11) but they bring them home again to 'warm themselves by the hearth'.

In analysing the rituals of the Nyakyusa, I have been driven to the conclusion that they are, in fact, dogged by a sense of guilt,[1] for this is the only hypothesis on which the linking of misfortune and sin, the preoccupation with 'filth', and the recurring acts of purification can be explained. One of the sources of this sense of guilt is, I suggest, awareness of anger within, for it is believed that such anger injures others. An act of confession is essential to many rituals, and what must be confessed are anger, hard thoughts, ill will against others. The anger is acknowledged to come primarily from men—it is the angry parent who rouses the shades to action by muttering over the fire—but the guilt, the filth, is projected on to the shade or the hero. It is when they 'brood on' men that men are contaminated. A shade of a man that is *nyalafu*—good, righteous—is one without a grudge, without anger against anyone, free of witchcraft, and free of sex transgression—'there is no accusation against him'.

[1] I doubted this earlier, cf. 'Nyakyusa Ritual and Symbolism', *American Anthropologist*, v. 56 (1954), pp. 237-8.

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there?" And after he went there was much food.' In fact, it appears that he took the teachers and schoolchildren to the grove that they might no longer be afraid of it: the girls gathered firewood there, and everyone entered and made a noise, thus breaking great taboos. But all this happened long ago (the visit to Mbyanga was in 1913 or 1914) and, as was indicated earlier, the common view among Christians is that pagan rituals *used* to be necessary and efficacious, but are so no longer. We were assured by Christians who themselves took no part in twin rituals that 'formerly people fell ill if they did not celebrate'. 'Yes, of course, they were very sick indeed in the old days, the whole body would swell.' Some even maintained that it was still necessary for pagans to *celebrate though not for Christians. A Christian chief explained:*

> The sacred grove of Mwakilhaba is just here in my country; . . . in the old days they used to take a little fresh milk and an unripe stem of bananas, and put them in the grove. . . . The next day the calabash was full of milk and the stem was ripe. This was really so in the old days, Kyala heard men and agreed to their requests in this way. We went to ask for rain and food in the groves; the chief would kill a cow and Kyala agreed, food and rain came. Now that the Gospel has spread, since the Europeans have opened the Gospel to us Kyala refuses to agree, he says: 'Since they are proud and refuse to hear the Gospel I will discipline them', and he refuses to agree to the old ways.
>
> QUESTION: What about witchcraft?
>
> Perhaps there were people who were witches in the old days; at any rate I know that when milk ran short and a man was accused to the chief of bewitching the cattle, the chief used to take his cattle and drive him out of the country, and then milk was plentiful again. Of that I am sure.
>
> QUESTION: And now?
>
> No, it is not like that now.

Many pagans attribute the decline in fertility which is taking place, and the decrease in the yield of milk, to the decay of the old communal rituals and the unhampered activities of witches.

Nevertheless, as the number of Christians in an area increases, the pagans tend to curtail their rituals more and more. The direct parallel between pagan confession, sacrifice, and communion with the shades, and the Holy Communion of the Christian Church is recognized by many, and one is felt to replace the other. Regarding the rituals of kinship we were repeatedly told: 'We see that the Christians, who say the only rituals are the

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number of separate plots per holding was less than where land was scarcer; at the same time the average size of separate plots was smaller in those more land-hungry villages. The reader may refer to Table III (page 15) for some illustrative figures. Though differences are not yet very great, nevertheless there seems to be a fairly clear correlation between the average size of villagers' holdings on the one hand, and on the other the number and size of separate plots, and this is entirely borne out by my general information obtained in villages where actual measurements were not made. The inescapable conclusion must be that increasing scarcity of land in the Lake Plains leads to increasing fragmentation and dispersion of holdings; further, the present land situation and land tenure system can only lead to a continuation of this trend.

To emphasise the actual situation in 1955, let me reiterate the results of my own village surveys in the very high density region. In a village in Korogo's chiefdom only a quarter of the younger men had paddy land of their own, holdings averaging about three-quarters of an acre; in a village in Mwakipesile's chiefdom, only 17 per cent. of the younger men had paddy land and holdings averaged about half an acre (cf. Table VII, page 37). These two examples are taken from the areas of most severe land shortage and are *not therefore altogether typical of the whole Lake Plains. Nevertheless, I* do not think that they are entirely atypical; more importantly, they indicate the present trend. Within another generation this fragmentation and scatter of holdings may well be the common feature everywhere in the flood plains unless the system of tenure and inheritance is modified. If the increase in population is quickened through improved medical facilities, better diet and housing, and improved conditions generally, then the position will become more acute. Such an increase is only to be expected. The Nyakyusa have decisively entered a money economy and they have learnt to seek higher standards of living. Only from their fields, by cash-cropping, can they expect to earn their livings and the demand for better living will not be curtailed – nor, of course, is it desirable that it should be.

There is another aspect of this whole matter which must be considered. It relates to the movement of individuals between villages. Such movement was, in earlier European days, a crucial factor in the age-village structure, for it was not only exceedingly frequent, but also it tended to undermine the idealised coeval basis of village life. Movement between villages is increasingly difficult now, for a newcomer naturally cannot easily obtain land, nor as much land as he would desire even at a moderate demand. Nevertheless, the reasons for movement persist, and they will do so whilst the fear of witchcraft remains and whilst illness and misfortune are attributable to the unfavourable aura of a place. There remains also the tradition of moving so that a man may escape from bad relations with kinsfolk or neighbours, or from the obloquy resulting from his own disapproved actions. Much social and psychological tension is being created now as a result of the new difficulty of movement, and so far the Nyakyusa have not evolved alternative methods.

On the other hand, so deeply engrained is the notion of the prestige and power which accrues to a village by virtue of the number of its inhabitants, that headmen and villagers alike remain most reluctant to refuse to accept newcomers, even when it inevitably means that the present inhabitants must meet a further decrease in the average amount of land available per family, for a newcomer must be allocated a holding if he is to remain. Consequently, if a holding is for any reason left vacant, a headman tends to refuse to re-allocate some or all of it amongst his villagers and thus to augment their holdings; but instead he keeps it in reserve pending the hoped-for arrival of another newcomer. Men desiring to leave their own village try to get